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## The War on Terror: And the Erosion of the Democratic Imaginary

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*The War on Terror:  
And the Erosion of the Democratic imaginary*

*Senior Project submitted to  
The Division of Social Studies  
of Bard College*

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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York  
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## Dedication

“When a man asks himself what is meant by action he proves that he isn't a man of action. Action is a lack of balance. In order to act you must be somewhat insane. A reasonably sensible man is satisfied with thinking.”

-James Baldwin

I want to dedicate this work to my Mother, Orinthia Perkins. Your continued love and sacrifice have allowed me to experience life in the most exceptional way possible. Without you I could not have made it this far.

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Introduction:  
The Day That Changed The World

“Time is passing. Yet, for the United States of America, there will be no forgetting September the 11th. We will remember every rescuer who died in honor. We will remember every family that lives in grief. We will remember the fire and ash, the last phone calls, the funerals of the children.”

– President George W. Bush

9/11 transformed the world. The attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington DC shocked the psyche of the people of the United States and set in motion a massive shift in U.S. policy. It took but a few hours for President George Bush to Declare that the United States was at war. On the night of the 11<sup>th</sup> George Bush asserted, “We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them . . . None of us will ever forget this day.”<sup>1</sup> Bushes remarks and his call to action marked the beginning of what has been a 16 yearlong war with little to no end in sight. What has been seen and identified as shifting policy and global aims comes from this war and this constant state of emergency. The United States of America has seen not only a shift in government policy but also an overall eroding of American democracy and the democratic imaginary.

First it is important to define the war on terror and whom it is that the United States is fighting and defending itself against. The War on Terror or the Global War on Terrorism is an effort led by the United States with aid from many of its allies in a fight against terrorism worldwide. Terrorist organizations and the countries that harbor them

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<sup>1</sup> Bush, George. President’s address to the nation, Speech, from, The White House, September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001.

and fund them are to be considered enemies of the United States and its allies. The war aims to eradicate terrorism globally, meaning that the war can only be won when terrorism itself ceases to exist. This war on terror has been long and costly. What we have accomplished, little of it is up for debate, but what we know is that we have destabilized former centers of power in the Middle East leading to a vacuum of sorts, where terrorists new and old have come together to create more havoc in the region and abroad.

Domestically we have spent billions of dollars, gone through the worst economic recession since the depression and we still are not sure if every phone call and email we send are being watched by someone in the pentagon. Out of the 16 year long fiasco we have seen the steady rise of executive power and the building of fear which has lead to a resurgence in far right movements and rhetoric. A fear that can be seen as a link to numerous ills we as a country have come to experience since this wars beginning.

As a country 9/11 and the war on terror have dramatically altered our nations concerns about safety and vigilance. This change brought upon us new legislation Like the Patriot act, prioritizing national safety and defense, often at the expense of civil and constitutional liberties. The after affects of this new legislation and new focus have stuck with the nation and the globe for over 15 years. Looking at the years prior to 9/11 and the war on terror the changes that have occurred are astronomical. We deported half the number of people we do today. Our state of surveillance was a fraction of its current size. And we didn't have to take our shoes off at the airport.

As a country we have changed our very nature. We have morphed from a nation of democracy and freedom into a security state. While our soldiers are off in the desert defeating the enemy, one who is new to America might think that the enemy is right here

in our country. Our airports are littered with armed guards holding military grade firearms; anyone who has arrived in New York's Penn Station post 9/11 will concur the fact that armed guard's walk around the train station outfitted as if they were on the battleground rather than a thriving metropolis. We as Americans have come to normalize seeing armed guards in our hubs of transportation, we have even come to accept that days of joy like the thanksgiving day parade will also host numbers of AR-15 wielding men and women, but then again we are a state at war.

Our very imaginary is being decimated by the war on terror and the resulting symptoms that come out of being in a forever war. "No nation can preserve its freedom in the midst of continued warfare."<sup>2</sup>

The democratic imaginary is a way of thinking about the social and historical world, which is America. Now at times American democracy has not been perfect of even all-inclusive and many have had to fight for the rights that so many others have enjoyed. Today in the modern U.S I will assert that there is a general imaginary of American democracy. This democracy in which we live is not just one of political order but of experience. We gain our democracy through the experiences we have with it. The notion of interacting with democracy as a lived experience connects much with Arendt's views on the success of the American constitution. Historically Americans have always moved their democracy forward by the experiences they have had in it. If we take the democratic imaginary as a lived experience then we can make an argument for how the war on terror has diminished this experience and this imaginary. As privacy is weakened and security and defense strengthened we see a change in our country, we see a growing

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<sup>2</sup> Madison, James. *Political Observations*. April 20<sup>th</sup> 1795.

aggression in the state and in ourselves. Militarization is not only limited to the state but it seeps into the psyche of the American people. Once the imaginary is tainted with fear and violence, the experience of lived democracy is weakened and the democratic imaginary fades off into something else. Citizens become less engaged and only focus on defense. We let funding for education fall as we put more money into a one sided war. We hope to strengthen our borders by deporting migrants and setting bands based on religion. We no longer embrace our differences in hopes of learning and building together but revert back to tribalism that is more suited for centuries passed then our current era. While this imaginary I will show to have been tested in the past, especially in times of war, the current state of the democratic imaginary has not been seen. Spying, drone strikes, secret prisons, and torture all help to dull the imaginary. And while this happens many sit back in comfort believing that extra security and extra military spending make them more democratic.

It means something to the democratic imaginary that neither major political party nor no politician to this date has claimed that we do not have a problem with terrorism. While it would be incorrect to say that terror does not exist in the United States, statistically we have not faced even a fraction of the terrorist attacks that have occurred since 9/11. Allies in Europe and the countries that harbor these terrorist organizations have suffered more attacks that the United States.

The war that we are fighting creates more terrorist than it destroys. The war in of itself is a self-fulfilling prophecy, as we continue to engage in the Middle East we create more terror and we appear as the villains. When our enemies speak of American tyranny they are not wrong. Drone strikes kill innocents, we hold suspects of terror without trial



and due process, we run into homes dragging people out of them and, causing a terror likened to that we felt on 9/11, the day we wont soon forget.

Former White House counterterrorism advisor Richard Clark when speaking about the days after 9/11 simply put it “we panicked.” While the panic was justified since America ha been relatively safe from foreign attack, and no few to anyone in the Bush administration had seen such trauma occur on U.S soil. But in the 15 years since 9/11 we have seen few positives from the war on terror. This panic has seemed to turn into nation building, failed democratization, and the creation of new threats (ISIS). For a war that has lasted so long and cost billions of dollars one would think we would be on the verge to winning by not and if not ready to pull out. But this war is different. Our enemy is different our technologies are different and our aim in this is different then all others. We are not fighting regimes or other states but, individuals, splinter cells of groups, or even disgruntled adults who claim an organization before they commit their crimes. This war has no bounds and for that reason it has become a war between the most powerful actor on the planet and individuals. The war on terror has created new problems that our county had never faced in the past, and the way the government has gone about handling these problems has created the erosion of the democratic imaginary.

Tuesday, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 began like so many other days that had passed. I woke up, had breakfast, and was dropped off at my elementary school on the upper west side of Manhattan. The early September day ironically was perfect for a flight, the sky was empty of clouds and the air still had the warmth of the departing summer.

As I entered my first grade music class my fellow classmates and I took our seats on the blue carpet that covered the room. We sat cross-legged with straight posture facing

our music teacher, an older woman who most certainly came from the generation of World War Two. The room had multiple American flags, some new and some that had been with her for many years. Like every music class before we began by standing up from the carpet and reciting the pledge of allegiance, after we pledged our teacher sat down to her piano and we sang “My Country Tis of Thee.”<sup>3</sup> Once we finished our singing our principles voice could be heard over the intercom telling us that parent shave been informed to come to the school and get their children. Us being 6-year-old kids we were excited. The day had been not more than 30 minutes to an hour. Little did we know that something horrific caused our joy.

My mother soon rushed into the school and hugged me tightly. As we walked out to the car I saw many other parents holding their children but the looks on their faces were not happy like ours. As we drove I looked out my window I saw what I would later be able to characterize as panic. Once I got home I saw the carnage on the TV. I sat with my mother and saw the destruction of the World Trade Center. I remember asking my mother while on the coach if I could go to my room and play, but she said nothing. She only held me tighter as tears began to fill up her eyes and then slowly fall down her face.

In this paper I will show how the democratic imaginary is being weakened by the war terror. In the following pages I will show how the United States has created internal strife among its populace to secure governmental power and deplete the democracy it claims to defend. There are many factors that have come to hurt American democracy and the democratic imaginary. If one thinks of democracy as more than just a type of government but a lived experience, it is clear that that experience has changed

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<sup>3</sup> Smith, F. Samuel. *My Country Tis of Thee*. 1831.

dramatically since the beginning of the war on terror. Democracy is lived and performed everyday. It is how Americans think of themselves and how they interact with the world. The experiences that Americans have with democracy have been passed down and habituated into each one of us. We know how to act in our democracy because we have lived with the democratic imaginary our whole lives. My aim is to show that the imaginary we live with has been eroded.

9/11 forever changed America. As a six year old I couldn't even begin to realize that through the carnage and destruction would rise a new America, one that sought to be stronger than before, one that would soon come to act as an absolute force that would justify its own brand of terror. I believe the affect of 9/11 was fear, shock, and weakness. Few of us thought we would see such destruction on our own soil. In a way 9/11 served as a wake up call to Americans. Our lives and the ability to live them freely were now being questioned. But more than the citizens our government used our feelings for a political use. Affect was used as a political tool to not rally the people but silence them. We were told that we needed more security, that we needed to be stronger, and that we might have to sacrifice our freedoms for our safety. 9/11 for me has come to represent not only a day of death and carnage but also the birth of a new nation and a new world. This new nation living in this new world is so powerful that it has made itself weak. It attempts to promote democracy while its actions prove to be anything but democratic. This new nation is one of power, force, and action. What we lost on 9/11 was a collective hope of our future. We lost our courage to continue our legacy of freedom and democracy.

In this project I will first explain what I call the “Democratic Imaginary.” I believe that the understanding of this topic is essential to this paper and my research. In an attempt at explaining the “Democratic Imaginary” I hope to show the spirit and history of American democracy and why the war on terror has shown itself to be antithetical to this spirit and history.

I will talk about fear and the marketplace of fear in America. Fear has been pushed down the throats of Americans since 9/11. We live in constant state of fear and anxiety. This fear in my opinion is not merely a symptom of terrorism but of a larger and further reaching attempt to push fear in the American people by American media. Furthermore I will show how the media has been altered from its original intention, originally being a pillar for the people to find truth and even a place for political dissent, to today’s media, being a lackey of corporate elites and a tool for them to disseminate myth.

I will also discuss the American empire and it’s continued growth, and how it has led to democratic erosion. As the American empire grows our goals as a nation exceed the state and go off into the world. The war on terror has presented the U.S. with the opportunity to further shape itself into an empire both foreign and domestic. Our actions outside of the state are all but democratic and our focus on what’s important tends to change shift when we look to expand and defend our power. As we look out we tend to stop shining a light on the problems within our nation, as we look to defend we also damage institutions that are meant to help Americans excel. American empire and expansion are anti-democratic and thus hurt the democratic imaginary.

## The Democratic Imaginary

“Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.”  
-Fredrick Douglass

This chapter is dedicated to creating an understanding of what I call the Democratic imaginary. The democratic imaginary is the very thing being eroded during the war on terror. The imaginary is both a belief and truth. It is shaped through experience and history. In this chapter I look to Hannah Arendt’s *On Revolution* and Sheldon Wolin’s *Democracy Incorporated*. I use these two authors because Arendt presents a belief in the history of American constituting thus creating a legacy and tradition of participatory government. Wolin presents the idea of the “imaginary” and the conflicting forces that damage this imaginary. I will first use both Arendt and Wolin to lay a base for the theory of the democratic imaginary. Using the theory laid out I will present my idea of the democratic imaginary and why the imaginary is so precious to democracy.

Hannah Arendt’s *On Revolution* discusses Arendt’s belief on why the American Revolution succeeded. She contrasts the speed of the U.S. from revolution to stable democracy, to revolutionary France and their longer road to stable constitutional democracy.

“The reason why the conflict between king and parliament in France resulted in such an altogether different outcome from the conflict between the American constituted bodies and the government in England lies exclusively in the totally different nature of these constituted bodies. The rupture between king and parliament indeed threw the whole French nation into a 'state of nature'; it dissolved automatically the political structure of the country as well as the bonds among its inhabitants, which had rested not on mutual promises but on the various privileges accorded to each order and estate of society. Strictly speaking, there were no constituted bodies in any part of the Old World. The constituted body itself was already an innovation born out of the necessities and the ingeniousness of those Europeans who had decided to leave

the Old World not only in order to colonize a new continent but also for the purpose of establishing a new world order. The conflict of the colonies with king and Parliament in England dissolved nothing more than the charters granted the colonists and those privileges they enjoyed by virtue of being Englishmen; it deprived the country of its governors, but not of its legislative assemblies, and the people, while renouncing their allegiance to a king, felt by no means released from their own numerous compacts, agreements, mutual promises, and 'consociations'<sup>4</sup>

The pre-political power displayed by violence occurring during stages of revolutionary France was not true power.<sup>5</sup> Misfortunes and anger could give way to angry mobs and the people destroy their governments, and their pacts, this was an experience that starkly contrasts that of the U.S.

Success is attributed to the history of constituting in America since the May Flower Compact. Since the arrival of the May Flower Arendt would say that Americans have been experiencing forms of self-government. It had no affect on the new Country to lose British colonial rule. The young revolutionaries were able to create a government not only by consent of the people, but for the people. Within the experience of self-government came a power. The power came from our continued promises and pacts and a confidence in one another "This confidence moreover, arose not from a common ideology but from mutual promises and as such became the basis for 'associations' - the gathering-together of people for a specific political purpose."<sup>6</sup>

The lived experience of democracy and democratizing has an affect on how Americans view their democracy. I would call that view a 'Democratic Imaginary.' The idea of democracy and a certain imagined idea of democracy gave way to power, and that

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<sup>4</sup> Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution*. (New York, NY: Penguin Publishing, 1977), 172.

<sup>5</sup> Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution*, 173.

<sup>6</sup> Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution*, 182.

power laid in the constitution and constitutional imaginary. Sheldon Wolin would say that the history of American constituting shown by Arendt gave way to the constitutional imaginary that prescribes the means by which power is legitimated, accountable, and constrained.<sup>7</sup>

The Democratic imaginary is one that is steeped in experience and action. Democracy is tangible it is more than just voting, but direct political action. The imaginary draws power from the people and their ability to interact with the democratic process. This democratic process I believe is one that goes beyond voting or Locke's social contract but one that aspires to be shaped and molded by the people. A belief that the goal of the state is not to just protect our property and self interest, but one that works to encourage us to be informed, to act in our democracy, to challenge opinions, and to live each day continuing the history of constituting and self government.

For the imaginary to be truly accomplished peace within and outside of the states borders is essential. This is to bring defense to war. I have belief that war hurts this imaginary. Historically the U.S. has seen itself in many wars, but the imaginary was stayed in tact. How could this be? Our enemies of the past have come to be not only allies but also friends. Our former colonizers in England have come to form with us strong bond and friendship. Former World War II axis powers have come to be our allies

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<sup>7</sup> Wolin, Sheldon. *Democracy Incorporated*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Publishing, 2008), 19.

and friends. Japan a nation we utterly devastated with two nuclear strikes, now has come to be a strong ally and trading partner. Even more our strongest ally in the region.

War has without a doubt created lasting tensions among nations, but our Imaginary never stopped striving for peace. We looked to end wars. We saw the evil that war breeds both at home and abroad. Former foes sat with us and we negotiated peace, and many prospered. What the war on terror does to the imaginary is never let go of war. Today we fight an enemy who has no home. We fight an enemy who waves no flags. Our enemy is not a state, but bands of people. Unlike wars of the past we have no way to reconcile and negotiate peace with our enemies. Wounds cannot be healed, and tensions cannot be settled in this war. For the American people this war is ultimately fought on them. As the United States fights terrorism, it also fights the democratic imaginary. Wolin, in his second chapter “Totalitarianism’s Inversion: Beginnings of the Imaginary of a Permanent Global War” speaks of a new imaginary that arises in the age of the War on terror, the ‘Power imaginary.’ This imaginary seeks to expand power of the state, and through this attempt at total power the U.S. acts as an imperial power abroad, using fear to keep the people the people starving for protection.

So today the State stands opposite to Arendt’s theory and ideal of democracy. The state now acts as the old colonial power. The essence of the democratic imaginary has been slowly sapped away. What truly makes the democracy exceptional: the interaction, the shared information, and strive for having the people and the state work as partners,



are being slowly exsanguinated. The very opposite form of government fought for in the revolution is now being practiced on the people of the United States today.

Today the government acts with the American people only acting as observers and not participants. Democracy has been changed. While the skeletal structures of democracy remain, the lived experience and participatory action needed for the democratic imaginary have been lost.

“The men of the American Revolution, on the contrary, understood by power the very opposite of a pre-political natural | violence. To them, power came into being when and where' people would get together and bind themselves through promises, covenants, and mutual pledges; only such power which rested on reciprocity and mutuality, was real power and legitimate, whereas the so-called power of kings or princes or aristocrats, because it did not spring from mutuality but, at best, rested only on consent, was spurious and usurped.”<sup>8</sup>

I believe that the loss of political engagement is an affect of the war on terror. I also see that the political imaginary of the day to be one closer to imperialism than to democracy. I see a battle of two imaginaries, the democratic imaginary losing this fight to the stronger and better-supported power/global war imaginary.

The war on terror has led Americans to be passive in their democracy. Our fear of terror has made us turn our backs on the democratic imaginary. Now our imaginaries have been morphed to yearn for only consumerism and protection. The natural courage and hope that all democracies need in order to function properly have left the democratic imaginary. By losing our courage to fear we now are consenting subjects rather than active participants in the democracy. Arendt's explanation on the American revolutionary understanding of power also highlights a danger to the passive citizenry. Once our

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<sup>8</sup> Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution*, 173.

government power is rested solely in the consent of the people and not their continued interaction, power can be usurped from the people. The elites of politics, science, academia, and commerce have all come to represent one body during the war on terror. The imaginary. For the days in which political elites worked to better the lives of the people has taken a turn and now elites serve elites. The people's paralysis has given way to the creation of a super elite, which work in every level of government. The war on terror has stopped our collective history of creating power through democratic action. We have become subjects in our democracy.

In conclusion the democratic imaginary is one that finds itself operating in both the past and the present. Its creation is an affect of the history and lived experience of democratizing and constituting that has occurred on the continent since Puritan arrival.<sup>9</sup> When referenced it should be thought of as a way of thinking an aspect of American life that is integral to democracy. The attacks on the democratic imaginary, while they might not violate the democracy directly, they do squash this imaginary. The war on terror has created an avenue for imaginary corruption and destruction. It is my goal to show how this democratic imaginary, cannot sustain itself during the war on terror. That the new aspirations and imaginaries of the state come in direct conflict with the democratic imaginary, thus coming into conflict with the experience and history that is crucial to the American democratic experiment.

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<sup>9</sup> Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution*, 172.

## Fear: A Political Creation

“History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need  
not be lived again.”  
-Maya Angelou

In this chapter I will discuss fear and its use as a political tool. Fear is used during the war on terror to make the citizen passive. I believe that fear ultimately cripples the citizen and ends his or her participation with government. Through fear political participation is substituted with a need for security. This action hurts the democratic imaginary, turning the citizen into a complying subject. In this chapter I will look to Sheldon Wolin’s *Democracy Incorporated* and Anne Norton’s *On the Muslim Question*. Using their literature I will connect their studies on democracy and the Muslim question to the war on terror laying a theoretical bases for my argument on fear and its use as a political tool. I will review and speak with the sources then lay out my critique and elaborate on the arguments in relation to the war on terror.

In *Democracy Incorporated* Sheldon Wolin describes to the reader what he calls myth. Myth Wolin would say is not just a story but also a shaped reality. Myth is bad to Wolin because inherently it is not real. Myth in his context is about exploits rather than argument or demonstration. Myth works to create drama when implemented properly. It pits a heroic force against a purely evil foe, creating justification for the hero’s actions, no matter what they are. Wolin’s study on myth is primarily concerned with the “cosmic myth.” The cosmic myth works to exceed the scale of ordinary politics. By drawing on the dramatic themes of good and evil cosmic myth helps to make navigating the world

easier as less deliberation has to be done to judge states and actors since the new reality only has good and evil.

Cosmic myth in Wolin creates a larger than life enemy whose sole goal is world domination, thus the hero needs to expand its power and is justified in this expansion to defeat its diabolical nemesis. 9/11 fits perfectly into Wolin's study of myth because 9/11 has come to be more than just the events that took place that day. When looking at 9/11, Wolin asserts that 9/11 was turned into a cosmic myth, with religious undertows,

“The mythology created around September 11 was predominantly Christian in themes. The Day was converted into the political equivalent of a holy day of crucifixion, of martyrdom, that fulfilled multiple functions: as the basis of a political theology, as communion around a mystical body of a bellicose republic, as a warning against political apostasy, as a sanctification of the nation's leader, transforming him from a powerful officeholder of questionable legitimacy into an instrument of redemption, and at the same time exhorting the congregants to a wartime militancy, demanding of them uncritical loyalty and support, summoning them as participants in a sacrament of unity and in a crusade to ‘rid the world of evil.’ Holy American Empire?”<sup>10</sup>

9/11 and the fear that was created out of the events, myth finds itself to be at the center of the promotion of fear. The myth of 9/11 Wolin would say has inflated the perceived dangers that we face as Americans. The duality of myth makes citizens feel both afraid and weak because terror is so random and our globalised world has allowed terrorists to spread their message outside of their borders. Myth also disempowers the citizenry. The “virtual reality” of the post 9/11 world is filled with a false sense of nationalism and an entitlement to redemption.

From the blood of 9/11 the U.S. was purified. Past sins had been cleansed, as 9/11 became our religion and myth. Past offenses by the U.S. had been erased from the popular consciousness. We as Americans are able to ask the question “why do they hate us?” because 9/11 and the myth created by it has allowed the U.S. to erase a past of over

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<sup>10</sup> Wolin, Sheldon. *Democracy Incorporated*, 9.

reaching with its power in the dealings with other nations, the propping up of dictators and other authoritative leaders, among other offenses.

Myth's ability to overinflate events also effects how citizens view their ever-growing world. Knowledge of ones community and surroundings becomes of little help when the world is dealing with global terror threats. It is easier to not only scare but to pacify the citizen who feels that they do not have the sufficient knowledge to engage in the politics of the times.

Myths creation of a war and terrorist virtual reality has created a false sense of fear. Wolin points out that war has had little affect on the American people since the civil war. Wars are not fought here on American soil, and further more the majority of terror attacks occur elsewhere. Myth has created fear by pushing terror into our everyday lives through the media and political rhetoric. While we know that terrorist present no existential threat to the United States, and we have vast superiority in every military capacity, why are we so afraid? Wolin would say that our fear comes from the myth. We have come to believe the myth of 9/11. Terror has been mystified beyond what it really is. We do not speak of nor treat terrorists like human beings. Media and political rhetoric aim to dehumanize terrorist actors. We do not and cannot see terrorist as human in this on going war on terror. Myth turns the U.S. into the righteous force of not only freedom but, God, and its enemies into a satanic and purely evil force that is opposite to everything we think we are, bent on world domination.

Using the concept of "political imaginary,"<sup>11</sup> in chapter two, Wolin asserts that a political imaginary gains a hold on the ruling groups and becomes a staple of the general

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<sup>11</sup> Wolin, Sheldon. *Democracy Incorporated*, 18.

culture and the political actors and the citizens become habituated to that imaginary and identify with it. Wolin derives two political imaginaries in this chapter, the “constitutional imaginary” and the “power imaginary.”<sup>12</sup> Wolin describes these two imaginaries as antagonistic to one another. The “constitutional imaginary” is one that prescribes the means by which power is legitimated, accountable, and constrained. While the “power imaginary,” seeks constantly to expand present capabilities and powers. The “power imaginary” has an inherent desire for power and control.<sup>13</sup>

The “power imaginary” can overtake the constitutional imaginary especially in times of conflict and war. Wolin uses Hobbes’ belief, that fear drives the citizenry to agree to be ruled by an absolute power in exchange for protection from enemies and domestic peace. Wolin contributes the emergence of the ‘power imaginary’ to the Cold War and the end to the social reforms of FDR. As WWII ended the U.S. and Soviet Union stood as the world’s two major superpowers. In an effort to secure both democracy and capitalism the American elites adopted the ‘power imaginary.’ Social reforms were dropped in exchange for loosened corporate control. Like the Cold War Wolin attributes the war on terror to the new power and forever war imaginaries. The imaginaries that are now held justify the extension of executive power to the right and responsibility to exceed constitutional limits in the interest of protecting the nation.

Imaginaries have a direct correlation with fear. Once a certain imaginary is taken a hold of by elites that imaginary is thus disseminated among the people through political actors, media, and habituation. The war on terror like the Cold War wolin would say

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<sup>12</sup> Wolin, Sheldon. *Democracy Incorporated*, 18.

<sup>13</sup> Wolin, Sheldon. *Democracy Incorporated*, 19.

promotes the forever war power imaginaries.<sup>14</sup> This imaginary thus goes into the corporate controlled media and is spread to the people. This includes the production of fear by broadcasting terrorist actions at home and abroad. The concept of myth creation and “the imaginary” work in tandem. Myth alters perceptions of reality, the political imaginary spawning from the myth. The 9/11 myth creates the 9/11 imaginary. Wolin would say that the reality that is shaped by the myth of 9/11 and the war on terror would create a war imaginary. Collectively citizens would feel as if they were directly affected by the war on terror, contributing to the fear. What is taking place is a false sense of participation. On one hand being in total war makes the citizen feel as if they could be killed at any random moment. On the other hand some citizens feel as if they’re over pronounced patriotism at home and the beating home of the domestic war drum are helping the troops in the Middle East. Our constructed reality has pushed the citizen to fuel his or her own fears.

Chapter three is Wolin's dive into what he calls Inverted Totalitarianism. Wolin believes that the U.S. democracy has changed into something else. In an effort to sustain the Cold war imaginary and the introduction of the global war on terror we have created a new political system in which corporations control government. Due to the continued decline in corporate restrictions since the cold war, the American corporation has become increasingly powerful. As corporate power was built up during the war, the fall of the Soviet Union created what today is American Superpower. Super power's need for

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<sup>14</sup> Wolin, Sheldon. *Democracy Incorporated*, 28.

control and expansion mixed with corporations' ever-expansive nature, helps create the new political system at hand.<sup>15</sup>

Inverted Totalitarianism Wolin would say is hard to call tyrannical, due to its inner workings. Inverted Totalitarianism (IT) does not work like traditional Totalitarianism (T),

“What is typically meant by “totalitarianism”? First and foremost, it is the attempt to realize an ideological, idealized conception of a society as a systematically ordered whole, where the “parts” (family, churches, education, intellectual and cultural life, economy, recreation, politics, state bureaucracy) are premeditatedly, even forcibly if necessary, coordinated to support and further the purposes of the regime. The formulation of those purposes is monopolized by the leadership. In classical totalitarian regimes it was assumed that total power demanded that the entirety of society’s institutions, practices, and beliefs had to be dictated from above and coordinated (*gleichgeschaltet*), that total power was achievable only through the control of everything from the top. In actual fact, no totalitarian regime succeeded in perfectly realizing that vision. Although each of the classic forms of totalitarianism was rife with corruption, plagued by incompetence, and corroded by cynicism, they did not fail for lack of trying.”<sup>16</sup>

Wolin would argue that (IT) works to make the people feel further apart. It is managed democracy where the citizens are pacified not by force, but by moving the politics to a global scale far away from the common mans understanding. (IT) Succeeds by encouraging political disengagement rather than mass mobilization and relies on private media to disseminate propaganda reinforcing official versions of events. (IT) is democracy in a comma. The people have left politics and governing up to elites who in turn promote their own agendas rather than promote the general welfare of the nation. Political interaction by the people is snuffed. Protests are shamed and rarely evolve into movements. Further more the superpower can justify its imperial aims due to 9/11 and the fear created. As the U.S becomes more expansive, it will work using its military

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<sup>15</sup> Wolin, Sheldon. *Democracy Incorporated*, 44.

<sup>16</sup> Wolin, Sheldon. *Democracy Incorporated*, 46.



might to re-shape states to create markets and trading partners, the ideology of inverted totalitarianism (capitalism) is at the crux of all decisions.<sup>17</sup>

Danger is what breeds fear, but what if there is no apparent danger? Terrorism is real and its affects are deadly. 9/11 killed nearly 3,000 people, and many of the first responders that day are now experiencing the deadly affects of the ruble and carnage. Since 9/11, since the begging of the war on terror, we have not seen a terror attack on that scale. When I look to the affects of fear on the democratic imaginary, the former reading of Wolin tells me that political creation of fear works in the undemocratic cycle of (IT). Through myth making and the adoption of different imaginaries fear has been used to paralyze the opposition necessary for democracy. The Iraq War and subsequent war on terror operations have seen little to no opposition by the citizenry. Today now more than ever we can communicate and gather ourselves from all corners of our nation, but when is the last time the people rallied against the war on terror? Past offenses of the U.S. faced powerful opposition from the citizenry. A demos was created in these times. The citizenry chose to act together outside of the government. Using nothing but their voices and their power in numbers, people rallied against what they could not stand for. The outcome of the demos' actions are not the goal, at many times the people will disperse and go back to life as it is. But to come together to use our natural power of numbers, our collective will to express our dissent that is our democracy working. Why the war on terror presents a threat to democracy is that through a fear imaginary it removes democracy from a paralyzed citizenry.

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<sup>17</sup> Wolin, Sheldon. *Democracy Incorporated*, 60.

As the people move further away from their democracy, the forces that have always been against democracy gain power. I agree with Wolin with regards to the need for (IT) to have global aspirations. The focus of the U.S. during the war on terror is global. I believe that the focus of a democracy must be domestic. The war on terror makes the U.S. spread itself too thin. Citizens now elect officials to vote on issues in nations they know nothing about on issues that they know nothing about. It is not that the citizen should be more informed, but that the issues of the democracy no longer center on the people. As the politics are further removed political apathy spreads. While we still hold the skeletal structure of a democracy, the life of the democracy, the soul and spirit, the people, fade away.

Wolin's theory on the inversion of democracy does hold the political use of fear as essential to democratic erosion. What I believe he lacks in his study of fear is it's feeling. Anne Norton in *On The Muslim Question* discusses what I believe completes the creation of fears democratic erosion. Here Norton pin points hypocrisies of the West in regards to the condemnation of Islam. In her study of the "Muslim Question" Norton highlights and dissects the myths and imaginaries that contribute to the state of fear post 9/11.

Norton's first chapter "Free Speech" challenges the conception that the west is a beacon of free speech while Islam and the Muslim world are antithetical to it. Norton asserts a point that westerners hold a belief that they and their governments are the true holders of free speech. Norton goes on to explain how certain acts of free speech, such as the Danish cartoons, *The Satanic Verses*, and the Theo Van Gogh's film, *Submission* have been used to assert free speech at the expense of Muslims. Norton uses the examples

of Islam phobic expression to critique westerns fears of Islam. While Norton holds onto the fact that the former mentioned artistic pieces were rightfully protected under free speech law she does however mention what is not. Norton Brings up Europe's protection of homosexual and other minority rights when it comes to free speech. Through her study she comes to the conclusion that westerns are hypocritical when it comes to free speech, more so many westerns use the right of free speech to both attack and denigrate the politically weaker and less active Muslim population.

Likened to Wolin's study of "inverted Totalitarianism" Norton also notes the hypocrisy of American free speech, she states

"Speech in Europe and the United States is less free than we like to think, and many—Christians, Jews, and secularists; Americans and Europeans; liberals and conservatives—are pleased to have it so. In the United States, often presented as a bastion of freedom of expression, free speech gives way to property rights. The right to free speech dies on the shop floor, whether that shop is a factory or a store in a shopping mall."<sup>18</sup>

Norton's examination of free speech in the western world can give way to the fabricated fear of Islam, especially post 9/11. With regards to my research, fear and the creation of fear is centered on creating the other. Norton sees the division and suggests that the differences that we see concerning Islam and the western world are created off false presumptions. Norton swiftly debunks these claims of religious obedience when she points out the protection that Rushdie was given in England when a fatwa was put on his head by the Ayatollah. By taking examples in which Muslim countries hamper free speech elites use this to make the people think that Muslims are against an essential western democratic value.

Furthermore Norton describes the present day function of free speech as prescribed. Norton claims that any free speech that falls outside of the accepted script is

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<sup>18</sup> Norton, Anne. *On the Muslim Question* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 38.

shut down and labeled divisive. This line of prescribed speech is quite narrow. If we are to believe that today we have prescribed speech then that speech cannot be wholly free. And unlike true free speech this prescribed speech does not promote the ideals of its originator. Free speech was meant to allow dissidents to speak, to have unpopular opinions enter the realm of discourse, ultimately free speech was meant to empower and protect the opinions of the minority. Today this right is used to do exactly the opposite, freedom of speech is now used as a bullying tactic, a way of continuing the oppression of oppressed people but all under the law and under the guise of democratic free expression. When regarding Muslims Norton says of free speech

“When free speech becomes a Muslim question, its principle fails and its practice narrows. In this account, freedom of speech is no longer a matter of supporting the expression of unpopular opinions, defending the rights of minorities to a place in the public square, or speaking truth to power.”<sup>19</sup>

Like free speech, women’s rights are another point in which Norton believes the West uses to create an otherness in regards to Islam. Using Theo Van Gogh’s film *Submission*, and Ayaan Hirsi Ali’s memoir *Infidel*, Norton sets up two starkly contrasting accounts of a woman’s life in the Islamic world. Gogh’s film Norton says creates

“an abstract and a profound personal cruelty in the series of imperatives *Submission* issues to women. You must want sex; you must want sex with men. Adultery is sex, sex is love, and love is good. You must want to open your body to men. Muslim women are victims and prisoners. You can have freedom and power only by refusing the Koran”<sup>20</sup>

Gogh has a very western idea of sex in his film. He wants to show how Islam is a constraint on women and their sexuality. *Submission* places its female lead in a forked road. Gogh offers her salvation through sex pitting her between a harsh puritan style

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<sup>19</sup> Norton, Anne. *On the Muslim Question*, 43.

<sup>20</sup> Norton, Anne. *On the Muslim Question*, 49.

Islam where men beat or rape her or offer her escape through sexual acts. Gogh believes that women can only be free if they escape Islam.<sup>21</sup>

The film acts in a way as propaganda one that Norton would say falls in line with the West damnation of Islam. Furthermore the film does not give its female lead any agency, she is either to stay with the abusive men in her Islamic world or escape it through sex either way she must always have some man. The need for denouncing Islam falls in line with much political rhetoric. Throughout the Western World politicians ask Muslims to think one way. They ask them to denounce the extremists of their religion. For Muslim to fully be acceptable they must connect with Western Values.<sup>22</sup> The Hypocrisy here is that the West is also home to sexual conservatives. Like many in the Muslim world the western religious conservative is anything but sexually open. Norton says that the West casts its sexually conservatives into the shadows, making them appear weak and small even though their power and influence are growing. This happens because sexual freedom is used as a tool in the west. By creating a clash of sexual civilizations, the citizen can fall under the belief that Muslims are not like them. The very basics of Western society can be believed to not be in Muslims creating further fear and animosity. Through sex Norton sees the creation of the Muslim other.

Ali's Memoir creates a very different perception of Islam. *Infidel* is a memoir of Ali's life. From her beginnings in Somalia to her accent in the Netherlands. Her father and local Imam saved Ali from genital mutilation; it was her grandmother who was the raging conservative. Her journey to the Netherlands and freedom is much different than the journey presented by Gogh. To Ali the Netherlands offers her freedom not because of

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<sup>21</sup> Norton, Anne. *On the Muslim Question*, 50.

<sup>22</sup> Norton, Anne. *On the Muslim Question*, 46

sex but because she “is able to craft her life as an independent, autonomous individual. She can get an education. She was born to a clan and a nation. She chooses to be a citizen.”<sup>23</sup>

Norton shows fear as a play on many myths. By devising what the West ideologically and contrasting that against some examples on opposite things happening in the Muslim world fear is created. The fear created comes from nothing but a lack of understanding. Like free speech sex and sexuality are used in a vacuum. By not complying or agreeing to the free sexuality ideal of the West elites attack Muslims, create opposition and fear to them. Norton tries to dispel fear by showing that both cultures are complex that there is not one Western mode of thinking or one Muslim but that both sides are comprised of many ideologies both liberal and conservative.

Norton in her chapter titled “Terrorism” highlights the fear that terrorism puts in the heart of Western civilization. Norton first lays out the fear as two fold. Norton believes that fear of terrorism comes from fear of the many and fear of the one. The many represent the present day migrants who have moved from their war torn homes for the safety and security of Western states. Norton contributes the fear of the many to be one of cultural change. As Migrants pour into Western nations some could fear that their cultures languages and customs will be over run. What it mean to be European or to be American might change if we allow the other on to our shores.

The fear of the many can be attributed to rhetoric and media pushed by elites. We are fearful because we are told that the new comers are dangerous. Wolin would assert that there is a ‘migrant imaginary.’ Today we view Muslim migrants with fear because

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<sup>23</sup> Norton, Anne. *On the Muslim Question*, 51.

we have chastised and berated Islam so much since 9/11. The evidence is there with President Trumps Muslim Ban, and the raging opposition by populists in Europe.

The Fear of the one is contributed to randomness. Norton asserts that it is true that terror creates fear and she says that fear is rational.

“These fears are real. The feared threats are true threats. Terror, horror, a sense of randomness and vertigo, and the feeling that the world is out of order, are reasonable passions before the monstrous, the irrational, the random, and the unsettled. The scholar Lorraine Daston calls them “cognitive passions.” They belong not to the ignorant and the unthinking but to the thoughtful. Daston writes of the natural world, not the world of politics. We expect certain things of the natural world, she has said. That world is orderly, and whether we think the design is God’s or Nature’s (or Nature’s god’s) we know it is orderly, regular, and predictable.”<sup>24</sup>

Terror makes the world irregular. Norton adds that public places become spots for hiding.

The fear of the one is that the one can hide amongst us. The world changes with terrorism. Train stations, public squares, and other urban centers change from places of familiarity and certainty into places of randomness and danger. Ultimately the terrorist especially the suicide bomber is feared because they walk amongst us. We do not see the terrorist until the strikes, whether the terrorist dress’ like us, speaks like us, Norton asserts that “the more integrated they seem, the greater threat they pose.”<sup>25</sup>

Fear in the age of global terror is justified. Norton makes great points to assure that justification. Fear of randomness and uncertainty are also justifiable. To see how fear is being used undemocratically, I look to Norton’s introduction of Hobbes. Terrorism creates fear because at any moment life can be lost. Hobbs points out that anyone can kill anyone.<sup>26</sup> Knowing that death can occur at anytime why today are we more afraid of death. While we know that death can occur, in society Norton says, “We know that, but we forget it. We forget because we trust our neighbors, or, more often, because we accept

<sup>24</sup> Norton, Anne. *On the Muslim Question*, 86.

<sup>25</sup> Norton, Anne. *On the Muslim question*, 90.

<sup>26</sup> Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan: or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiastical and Civil*. 1651.

the risk of living how and where we do: because we want the things that other people bring us. We forget it because if we are to have democratic politics, we must have courage, and courage requires us to forget our fears.’’<sup>27</sup> While the suicide bomber creates fear out of the unknown that fear is not new but has always been around us. We have chosen to forget fear and be courageous so that we can move forward in our democratic society. What the war on terror has done to fear is remove its antithesis, which is courage. The democratic imaginary is deeply affected when fear cannot be combated with courage. Today in a globalised world fighting global terror the unknown has become so large that it cripples the ability for the citizen to be courageous. The idea of a random and uncertain world has been pushed onto the citizenry post 9/11. The necessary hope and courage that are essential to democracy and democratic thinking have been ruled by the myth and imaginary of the global war on terrorism.

Norton’s study of the “Muslim Question” has led me to see fear as a political creation. The natural fears that we are all vulnerable to are not like political. Political fear is an instrument that is constructed it is not natural. It is an experience that is cultivated then disseminated amongst the people from those in power. Through the hypocrisies dispelled in Norton’s’ first two chapters and the loss of courage presented in her chapter titled “Terrorism” fear in respect to terrorism and Muslims is one centered on the belief that the world is a new place with new problems.

I attribute the belief of a new world to myth making and Wolins description of how myths work. Norton has taken a clash of civilizations and showed that there is not clash of civilizations but a clash of hypocrisies. A myth has been created to pit Islam

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<sup>27</sup> Norton, Anne. *On the Muslim Question*, 93



against the West. In this attempt to create fear opposition to Islam has been used to divert our attention away from issues that are necessary to democracy.

Terror and the resulting destruction that comes from terrorist attacks create a sense of fear in the assaulted. Since 9/11 and the subsequent war on terror, large amounts of fear have been created and absorbed by the American people. Terror specifically Islamic terror is readily available for viewing on nightly news channels and other forms of news media. The War on Terror has created an obsession over threats and fear. This obsession has become so routine and institutionalized that it has become our new normal. We sit in front of TV screens watching terrorist attacks and the carnage they create, like moths to a flame. And as we go about our daily lives, most of us never encountering terrorists or terrorism, we return home to be updated by the nightly news that something exploded in the Middle East and then the fear comes right back. The fear experienced during this war can be likened to the Cold War. Where the soviet spies have become home grown terrorist and the Russians have become ISIS, Al Qaida, and any disgruntled teen that searches too deep into the web.

What we have seen as a major advantage to terror is the control over fear. From the perspective of the terrorist they control fear through engaging in what are perceived as random attacks. The American media has its own control on fear. With terror reports and suspicions constantly being broadcast over all outlets, the American people have had their fears heightened. In the Last 16 years the fear of terror and Islam have grown exponentially. The threat of supposed terror is felt in many minds while the very few terrorist attacks directly affect Americans. This fear has grown into one of distrust and disunity. The War on Terror and its focus on the Middle East and its painting of Muslims

has created a faction of Americans that believe Islam is ideologically incompatible with The U.S. and democracy as a whole. The fear of Islam and the Islamic terrorist has a long history in Western Culture. From the Crusades to the earlier Islamic Moore occupation of Europe, there has readily been a battle between Muslims and Christians.

The amount of attention terrorism gets in the media seems to be counterproductive in battling terrorism. Historically terrorist hoped to gain notoriety and publicity through their attacks. The added media attention works in two ways: it publicizes the terrorist and their acts and it instills fear in the American people. As the fear builds the people become afraid of citizens who they now regard as other. The government can then pass legislation in the name of defense and protection, but ultimately undermines democracy.

As we continue to prioritize security a threat must be ever present and encompassing. Our media continue to take part in the market place of fear to keep the people in a state that needs security. Without a present danger there is no need to be fearful or to be securitized, but if we are to believe that the terrorist walk amongst us then we will give ourselves to the state of security. While fear and democracy are not antithetical, fear produces many of the ills that make democratic society undemocratic.

I believe that fear caused by 9/11 and the War on terror directly Impacts our political process. When looking at Democrats and Republicans in relation to the on going war on terror neither side can downplay the fears of terror, as it would be political suicide. The right may use words such as radical Islam, and Muslim extremism, but the left will not say that we do not have a problem with terror. The government as a whole has monopolized fear, which is crippling to the democratic imaginary.

Fear also has the power to turn into violence. A scared demos and more importantly one that sees themselves in a war with Islam, is a demos that can turn ugly quickly. Many Americans had their first direct experience with Islam during 9/11. And while many voice opinions that Islam is not violent and that it is a religion of peace. Many American have been fed a narrative that is counter to those claims. By demonizing the Muslim American community we are lost on the fact that many Muslims in this country love it, and that those who flee their war torn nations come here in search for refuge not to blow things up. Our popular media will sensationalize stories and would rather report on terrorist attacks than issues that are happening in America.

Muslims have been one of the leading demographic groups in helping with the Flint Michigan water crisis. Michigan Muslims and groups such as the Michigan Muslim Community Council (MMCC) in conjunction with various partners are helping by providing Flint residents with clean drinking water, filters, educational material related to the hazardous water, offering free lead testing, and raising money to assist the Flint communities.

Since 9/11 islamophobia has increased. According to Muslim advocacy group, the Council on American–Islamic Relations Muslim hate crimes were five times higher in 2015 then pre 9/11. This is a stark reminder that the public panic launched by 9/11, biased media coverage, and subsequent attacks have normalized Islamophobic attitudes. Stoked by the hateful rhetoric of politicians like Donald Trump, Islamophobia is worse today than ever.

What we know from FBI data and the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) is that these attacks are not isolated, but they are numerous. Corey Saylor is the

director of CAIR's department to monitor and combat Islamophobia. Saylor believes that there have been four waves of anti-Muslim crimes in America since 9/11. Immediately after 9/11, there was a significant rise in anti-Muslim activity. According to the FBI, in 2001 anti-Islamic hate crimes spiked by 1,600 percent with 481 incidents. CAIR noted another surge in 2006 — the reason for it remains unclear. Another spike followed the Park51 controversy in 2010, in which New York City considered building a Muslim community center and mosque near Ground Zero. The Highest concentration of attacks came at the end of 2015. According to CAIR 78 mosques were targeted for vandalism that year more incidents than they had documented in any one-year since they started tracking in 2009. Compare this to 2014, when CAIR only documented 22 similar incidents, or 2013, when they documented 20.<sup>28</sup>

The war on terror and the fears that have risen do not only pertain to Muslims. War and fear also make us want to have strong borders. A nation that owes its success to immigrants is now becoming more and more xenophobic. While it is obvious to connect 9/11 to islamiphobia, immigration and the securing of our borders is also impacted by our war on terror. More now than ever the talk of secure borders can be heard around the world. In Europe the migrant crisis has riled up the far right making their presence ever more visible, and they have gotten to many citizens as well. Here in the US we have looked towards our southern boarder as a potential gateway for terrorist and undesirables a like.

What politicians have done is create a link between terrorism and immigration. The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC) published a video on their

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<sup>28</sup> <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/civil-rights/hate-crimes>. Hate Crime Statistics (April, 2017).

website in 2006 asking Americans if they felt safer. This video contained images of Bin Laden, Kim Jung Ill, masked jihadist, and Mexicans climbing over the boarder. What has been created is an “us versus them” mentality. Politicians would like the people to believe that our enemies are coming for us from all sides. Politicians started framing almost any migrant at the US-Mexico border as a potential terrorist threat. In the past, the border was a place to stop drug trafficking and undocumented migration, but there became a surveillance-driven, militarized perspective of migrants as potential terrorists. This rhetoric then became policy. National security soon became a driver for immigration reform and policy. None of the 19 hijackers who carried out the attacks on September 11 entered the country illegally, though three had overstayed their visas or violated their rules of stay. But alongside calls for surveillance of migrants, the newly created Department of Homeland Security soon absorbed the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and 21 other agencies.

Storming the fires of fear has a very real impact. While people sit back and listen to false narratives of immanent danger the US government has acted fast and harshly. Since the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was created in 2003, the US has deported an average of 334,000 people a year, far more than in any year before 2001. Immigration and the large deportations cannot be attributed to one side of the political isle. While the right might spew vehement rhetoric towards immigrants, the left has not championed the immigrant or the illegal migrant. The Obama administration deported over 2.5 million people, and a record number 438,421<sup>29</sup> people in 2013. What is equally

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.ice.gov/statistics>. ICE Statistics (April, 2017).

as shocking is that in the record breaking deportation of 2013 many of those deported were young minors fleeing violence in Central America.

As security remains a priority immigrants face a tougher journey in finding refugee in the United States. Now immigrants especially Latinos face being labeled a terrorist just because they look different. States have implemented ID laws, many of the harshest being states near the boarder and this is all post 9/11. President Trump made it one of his goals to create a multi-billion dollar wall to make our boarder more secure.

There is also a fiscal component to the fear. As we see that boarder patrol and immigration are considered vital in this war we have both expanded the agencies and given them more money. Within DHS, agencies tasked with immigration enforcement functions have shown huge surges in their budgets and staff. The budget of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has more than doubled to \$11.5 billion from FY 2002 to FY 2010, while its staffing has seen a 42 percent increase over the same period. And Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) budget has more than doubled to \$5.74 billion from FY 2002 to FY 2010, its staff growing by just under 40 percent between FY 2004 and 2010.<sup>30</sup> Fear is expensive, and the costs of fear are put upon the American people.

While it is morally wrong to discriminate based on race or national origin, and enact harm on someone for being different, the true crime is done to the democratic imaginary. Fear has destroyed one of our most unique and essential values. Our Nation is a nation of immigrants constructed and run by the children of those who came from all corners of the earth. Fear pushes us into our own camps and we thus end the mission of

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org>. "American Immigration Council"(January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017)

creating the world in America. To discriminate against Muslims and immigrants is to spit on a legacy of acceptance and inclusion. I would even go as far to say that illegal immigrants also deserve the respect and protection offered to those who are documented. The war on terror and the political use of fear have driven us further apart, alienating us from each other and our democracy.

The point should be made that the goal of terrorist attacks is fear. Terrorists due to the lack of numbers and overall military capability do not possess the means to take out large targets or even very strategic and protected ones. What terrorists do in most cases are attack small targets, civilians mostly. Whether it is the Orlando club massacre or a random car bombing terrorist attack civilians to produce large amounts of fear. It has been mentioned that politicians and the media aid in this fear, but their presence in the marketplace of fear is not a noble cause meant to assist the people, but an attempt to create a culture of fear that is sustained and serves many of the most powerful interests in American society. The media are invested in the culture of fear because it helps them sell more ads and publications. Scared people crave information needing updates constantly; those works to both keep them updated and fearful. Politicians cultivate fear because it lays a solid groundwork for them to offer solutions. The more fearful people are the more they crave solutions. The wanting for solutions also allows politicians to blame the opposition for creating the awful conditions, and then take a safe position against the danger. Commercial interest also benefits from fear, as people seek goods and services to provide them safety, we will dive deeper into this later. Finally the government as a whole benefits from fear because the various arms of the government will get more funding under the belief that they will bring safety. Barry Glasner, the author of, *The*

*Culture of Fear*, asserts that the powerful emotion of fear is gathered for interest other than safety.<sup>31</sup> That there is a great irony in that producing high levels of fear do not make people safer, and that having fear as a baseline can make people over react to small issues and be passive towards greater threats.

Post 9/11 threat and fear have been used to push interest rather than promote public safety. While 9/11 was tragic and reasonably instilled fear in the minds of many, the threat of terrorism is overstated and exaggerated. There is a long list of things that are more likely to kill someone than terrorism. Fire works, elevators, choking, police, care accidents, the list goes on. Thinking that we are more vulnerable to terrorist attacks today than before 9/11 is also false. We have boosted our security and surveillance to record heights. We have become more aware of terrorism today than at any other time in our nations history, but people have become more fearful of terror post 9/11. With all of the measures we have taken why do we still fear terrorism so much? The answer to that is that there are elites who have a vested interest in keeping people afraid of terror.

Fear is not un-democratic or an attack on the democratic imaginary, but the use of fear as a political tool is. As political actors and other elites use fear to squash the power of the people we lose values that are inherent to our democratic imaginary. The media and political elites turn the fearful into lambs then inflate the fear produced by terrorism. Promising solutions, and asking the fearful to follow them, only to have their fears pushed onto them every time they tune in to the nightly news. Through rhetoric and media displays, the people feel powerless and defenseless. We turn our power over to the politicians hoping to provide safety but in return they fan the fires of fear. As the culture

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<sup>31</sup> Glasner, Barry. "Scared Selfish: A Culture of Fear's Values in the Age of Terrorism" *The American Sociologist* (Springer 2004), 94.



of fear is expanded what we see is policy geared towards our fears whether it be increased deportation or a travel ban on Muslims, but we don't feel safer. In the end fear is the tool used to damage our democratic way of thinking, and it becomes apart of Americas new culture of war and security. We continue to close ourselves off not only from other nations but our fellow citizens. Our fears create factions amongst us. And as we continue to create deeper divides between ourselves we ultimately give our enemies what they want, fear and disunity.

## The American Empire

"We all have to be concerned about terrorism, but you will never end terrorism by terrorizing others."

-Martin Luther King JR

The war on terror has shaped the U.S. into an imperial power. This chapter will show the imperial nature of the U.S. during the past 16 years of the war on terror. This chapter will look to how the undemocratic nature of the war abroad has seeped into the American state. Looking at the political, economic, and militaristic components of empire, I will show how the U.S. has come to shape itself as an imperial power and how that power has hurt American democracy. Looking at Anne Norton's *On the Muslim Question*, J.A. Hobson's *Imperialism: A Study*, and Sheldon Wolin's *Democracy Incorporated*, it will be shown how empire inversely affects democracy. And how the two cannot coincide together.

Norton's ninth chapter in *On the Muslim Question*, "In the American Desert" looks at The U.S. battle in the hidden deserts of the Middle East. The war on terror has allowed the U.S. to work against its many democratic principles. While on the home front Norton describes the violent rhetoric of political pundits,

"The more established purveyors of hate, Limbaugh, Savage, and Coulter, have also traded in these unwholesome wares. They have been joined by intellectuals, pundits, and public figures: Daniel Pipes, Richard Pearl, David Frum, and congressional representatives Peter King (R-NY), Michele Bachmann, (R-MI), and Paul Broun (R-GA). But their calls for internment camps, purges, and persecution have remained ineffective. If they speak to some, they are mocked by many more. The hard-fought struggles of the civil

rights movement and the shameful memory of Japanese internment have kept the country clean of such measures.”<sup>32</sup>

While Norton sees the speech as hateful she does say that the American populace as a whole “mocks” this speech. Because of the dreadful past of American abuses to minority groups, Norton believes we have a collective opposition to outright bigotry.

Empire on the other hand allows for this hate to be played out on the battlefield, away from the American gaze.

The imperial nature of the war on terror has limited the visibility of the abuses that have occurred on American soil. We looked outward for so long, documenting the abuses of Saddam Husain, and other dictators in the region. The hypocrisy of abuses is captured perfectly in Norton’s conversation of Abu Ghraib.

“In taking over the prison at Abu Ghraib, the United States took the place of Saddam Hussein. The prison, already a notorious place of abuse, came under new management, but the abuse continued. The tearing down of the Bastille was, as many historians have observed, a largely symbolic act: there were few prisoners held within its walls. The decision to keep Abu Ghraib intact and use it as Saddam Hussein had used it was both a practical and a symbolic act. Taking the prison was an act of conquest. It might have been used to mark the difference between Saddam Hussein’s regime and the liberating invaders. The occupation forces chose to leave the prison standing, however, and in doing so, they seemed to step into Saddam’s place. They kept the structures of Iraqi imprisonment intact. The abuses at Abu Ghraib argued that the forces of the American occupation had not only taken the place but assumed the practices of the former tyrannical regime.”<sup>33</sup>

As we looked to democratize Iraq Norton shows how we kept a symbol of autocratic power in Abu Ghraib. Further more Norton would say that this act falls in line with U.S. policy. She notes that the U.S. has become a “carceral society.”<sup>34</sup> The holding of prisoner and the abuses of prisoners fall in line with imperial U.S.A. our attempt to bring democracy to Iraq began with a key component of the new American democracy, the prison.

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<sup>32</sup> Norton, Anne. *On the Muslim Question*, 176.

<sup>33</sup> Norton, Anne. *On the Muslim Question*, 180.

<sup>34</sup> Norton, Anne. *On the Muslim Question*, 180.

If our past has given us an intolerance to hate speech and violent rhetoric, where is the outrage against this American conquest? Norton would argue that there is little to no transparency during the war on terror. The American media, which once prided itself on being a source of opposition to the political and corporate elite, now falls to their feet.

“ The Abu Ghraib photographs testify to the limits placed on—and accepted by—the media. They also testify to the ways in which the practices and conventions of the mass media have undermined structures, practices, and expectations upon which democracy depends. The Enlightenment taught Westerners to look upon the press, and, later, on the mass media, as central to democratic politics. Insistence on freedom of the press followed the confident belief that the media would oversee and chasten government and economic power, to make dissenting voices heard. Market expressions of the people’s passionate desire to know would spur the media to greater oversight, greater diligence, greater daring. It has not been so. Sheldon Wolin demonstrates how capitalism has made the media servants not of subscribers, but of owners and advertisers. Rather than being spurred on by the people’s desire to know, the media is ever more closely constrained. Oversight diminishes; the media are fed by the political and economic powers they once challenged. Dissenting voices are silenced, not by the state, but by media who act as strict and unlicensed censors: exiling dissident views to the fringes of discourse or silencing them altogether”<sup>35</sup>

A knowledgeable citizenry is essential to democracy. Having a media that now serves the interest of elite makes it almost impossible to gain knowledge through media. The press and mass media now do not tell the true story of the war on terror but only pieces of the truth. The American empire in the war on terror now can produce more myth. The media, which had once acted as a tool for the people has now been turned against them.

Usurpation of the press has taken away access of the war on terror. The American people can no longer monitor the war and what information they do receive has been heavily filtered. Acting as an imperial power, the U.S. now has tampered with the corner stone of democracy, the freedom of the press.

In Wolin’s fourth chapter “The New World of Terror” he identifies how terror can be used politically to bring justification for empire and superpower. Wolin States “Terrorism is both a response to empire and the provocation that allows for empire to

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<sup>35</sup> Norton, Anne. *On the Muslim Question*, 185.

cease to be ashamed of its identity.”<sup>36</sup> If this is true Wolin’s statement holds an even deeper opinion. Wolin here address terror as a response, a response done by a people. This act is seen as political, done by political beings. For the U.S. to make imperial gains Wolin believes that a new imaginary must come to fruition, this imaginary is the “imaginary of the terrorist”

The war on terror to Wolin presented an opportunity for the aspirations of empire to be met through the “traditions and constraints of constitutional government.”<sup>37</sup> The fear created by 9/11 allowed for a new imaginary. This creation of the terror imaginary was formed to attack the fears that had just been breed by the destruction of the World Trade Center. In the new world of terror created by 9/11 terror was constructed to act as a political tool. Terror became marked as boundless and its lethality limitless.

“At the same time, the character of absolute evil assigned to terrorism—of a murderous act without reasonable or just provocation— works toward the same end by allowing the state to cloak its power in innocence. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11 Americans asked, “What have we done to deserve this?” The official silence that met the question made plain the obvious answer: Nothing. When a few voices suggested that acts of terrorism had been committed in retaliation for U.S. government actions abroad, the media quickly dismissed the notion as implausible and vaguely unpatriotic. (It was an object lesson in how the system can enforce censorship and stifle opposition without appearing to do so.) Terrorism was made to appear as irrational violence, without apparent cause or reasonable justification. It became stylized as “threatening,” its intentions unknown until too late. Action in response to it could thereby appear as “pure,” without ulterior or mixed motives, provoked. An innocence that under normal circumstances might raise suspicions about motives served to justify extensions of power at home and abroad. In the ponderous summary of one commentator, “The most carefree and confident empire in history now grimly confronts the question of whether it can escape Rome’s ultimate fate.”<sup>38</sup>

Terrorism and terrorist in this age become perverse, monstrous, and inhuman. Once this imaginary is adopted the citizen is both afraid and on the hunt for redemption. The terrorist comes to represent the most evil force in the world. Furthermore this imaginary allows for the reshaping of the existing political system. In the war on terror the U.S. government begins to expand itself, the powers of the executive have been expanded,

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<sup>36</sup> Wolin, Sheldon. *Democracy Incorporated*, 70

<sup>37</sup> Wolin, Sheldon. *Democracy Incorporated*, 70

<sup>38</sup> Wolin, Sheldon. *Democracy Incorporated*, 71

these powers include military and police functions. Through the guise of protection and security the U.S. in this new world can justify all actions. Occupation of foreign countries and the spying on of its own citizens are justified today because we are fighting the most evil of enemies. For Wolin as long as the U.S. continues imperial practices during the war on terror, it will continue to try to reshape its identity both foreign and domestic. As imperialism persists we will see how it will change the lives of Americans. Democracy will soon fall to empire.

J.A. Hobson's *Imperialism: A Study* remarks on how the economics of imperialism do not come to contribute to the whole of the imperial state but rather to serve the interest of corporate elites. The war on terror has presented many corporations especially oil and defense companies with a lucrative opportunity. Hobson believed that the economic interests of the few would take hold of an aspiring empire. While these elites will experience economic gains, Hobson sees the opposite happening for the state. The whole community ultimately suffers economically to the hands of imperialism.

"It (imperialism) is far more rational than at first sight appears. Irrational from the standpoint of the whole nation, it is rational enough from the standpoint of certain classes in the nation. A completely socialist state which kept good books and presented regular balance sheets of expenditure and assets would soon discard imperialism; an intelligent *laissez-faire* democracy which gave duly proportionate weight in its policy to all economic interests alike would do the same. But a state in which certain well-organized business interests are able to outweigh the weak, diffused interest of the community is bound to pursue a policy which accords with the pressure of the former interests."<sup>39</sup>

The type of state that pursues imperialism can be likened to Sheldon Wolin's Inverted Totalitarian State. Economic interests come to be the interests of the state.

One must question how the interest a small elite class surpassed the interests on the American people? Hobson would say the financiers of imperialism become its governors. Hobson believes that patriotism is the fuel that powers the imperial engine

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<sup>39</sup> Hobson, A. J. *Imperialism: A Study*. (1902), 47.

“Finance manipulates the patriotic forces which politicians, soldiers, philanthropists, and traders generate; the enthusiasm for expansion which issues from these sources, though strong and genuine, is irregular and blind; the financial interest has those qualities of concentration and clear-sighted calculation which are needed to set imperialism to work.”<sup>40</sup>

Through their manipulation corporate elites can make imperialism attractive. In the case of the United States 9/11 allowed the U.S. to seek expansion by way of war. Wartime imaginary bolstered a false sense unity with our troops. The people were thus under the myth of expansion due to a concentrated effort by finance. What must also be looked to are the connections between corporate elites and politics. And how corporate elites have come to join Washington, D.C.’s elite.

Imperialism offers a chance for elites to usurp power. Once political power is centralized by a ruling class democracy is lost. While the elites will prosper the general welfare of the state will suffer. Imperial gains are selfish and do not extend beyond the wealthiest classes. Since our adoption of imperial policies and our continued encroachment into the Middle East the U.S. has seen dramatic economic problems. While the drivers of U.S. imperialism have come to see more wealth, Americans are still trying to recover from the great recession and keep their heads above water. The imperial U.S. has sought to weaken the economic protections of the citizenry and enrich the corporate elites who have taken control of government.

Empire and democracy ultimately fail the state that believes it can sustain both. From the ancient empires of Greece and Rome to the British Empire, no state was able to maintain their democracy and empire. The Goals of Empire are antagonistic to

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<sup>40</sup> Hobson, A. J. *Imperialism: A Study*, 59.

democracy. Through imperialism a state begins to move away from the freedoms expected in democracy. Abroad the state will act as an authoritative leader and at home the state will feel the pressures to militarize themselves. In the modern attempt for the U.S. to seize imperial glory, war has been most used to disguise imperial goals. As the war on terror continues the United States falls deeper into the trap of imperialism. The imperial goals of the U.S. have three components political, economic, and militaristic.

Empire is an attempt at reconstructing a nations identity. The War on Terror creates a single political focus. Sheldon Wolin argues that the war on terror creates a new condition of life, which creates a world around good and evil and a cosmic proportioned battle between those forces. As the people begin to adjust to this new way of life the democratic imaginary begins to move towards security, rather than freedom.<sup>41</sup> Elizabeth Anker in *Orgies of Feeling* argues a similar point to Wolin's. Anker argues that the political discourse of good and evil or what she dubs "melodramatic political discourse",<sup>42</sup> constructs legitimacy for anti democratic state power.

"Melodrama depicts the United States as both the feminized, virginal victim and the aggressive, masculinized hero in the story of freedom, as the victim-hero of geopolitics. Its national injuries morally legitimate the violence, extensions, and consolidations of state power that melodrama posits as necessary both for healing the nation's wound and for reestablishing the state's sovereign freedom. Melodramatic political discourse provides the tableaux and legitimacy for the late-modern expansion of power."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Wolin, Sheldon. *Democracy Incorporated*, 80.

<sup>42</sup> Anker, Elizabeth. *Orgies of Feeling: Melodrama and the Politics of Freedom*. (Durum, NC: Duke university Press, 2014)

<sup>43</sup> Anker, Elizabeth. *Orgies of Feeling: Melodrama and the Politics of freedom*, 3.



The fear of terrorism was pushed upon citizens creating a need for security, surveillance, and ultimately the expansion of power. It then makes sense why President Bush could legitimize a preemptive war strategy. Under the belief that Iraq was harboring weapons of mass destruction, President Bush was able to unilaterally engage in war with Iraq under the notion of a perceived threat. Preemptive war strategy has little to do with democracy. In the past we have seen examples of the worlds most vilified autocrats using the strategy to solely secure land and power. Hitler's preemptive war strategy was used in the attacks on Poland and Russia.<sup>44</sup> By using the events of 9/11 and melodramatic political discourse Bush and his advisors were able to sell the belief that Iraq was an existential threat, but to this day we have found no weapons.

Empires continued Antagonism with democracy is that empire is not self-governing. The events that take place outside of the imperial state are not voted upon or even completely seen by the people. The added undemocratic element is that our imperial quest is wrapped within an on going war. As our strategy is one of preemptive strikes, the U.S. then can choose when to obey international law. Wolin points out that while the U.S. turns over war criminals to other nations, its own officials or agents are not treated in the same way. The U.S. in its quest can chose when and when not to act democratically or respect the sovereignty of other nations.<sup>45</sup> Empire is totalizing in its aims and that total power does not check itself at the nations borders. Our globalized

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<sup>44</sup> Wolin, Sheldon. *Democracy Incorporated*, 44.

<sup>45</sup> Wolin, Sheldon. *Democracy incorporated*, 133.

world creates global terrorism; this global battle creates justification for increased domestic power. Domestic and foreign affairs and the line that we draw between them Wolin says are vanishing. The war on terrorism has an emphasis on ‘homeland security,’ and with doctrines of preemptive war and freedom from international constraints, the new powers of the United States can turn inwards to fight the terrorist that are harbored here. Wolin says that this new domestic power is not judged by ordinary constitutional standards but the states characterization of terrorism, making the undemocratic nature abroad justifiable, as the war on terror, like the U.S. has a global reach.<sup>46</sup>

Our continued aggression in the Middle East has hardened our spirits as well as silences our collective consensus. Many bedrock civil liberties have been traded away. Some initial excesses, like the use of torture, were curbed. But the norm is still inhumane forms of detention, and abuse that meets the definition of torture. Meanwhile, the United States has maintained what is for all intents and purposes an extrajudicial prison in Guantanamo Bay since 2001. The power that is exerted abroad, especially the violent actions taken is met at home with little opposition from either party or the people. As a people we have adopted a mindset of counter-terrorism, where our attacks are seen as defensive. Politicians face little to no scrutiny for extrajudicial killings. Both parties see remote strikes against terrorist to be advantageous to the old style counter terrorism that was practiced in the early years of the war. Neither side loses political credibility when

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<sup>46</sup> Wolin, Sheldon. *Democracy Incorporated*, 132.

innocents are killed in air strikes due to the restructuring of the peoples ideology.

Freedom has become second to the need for security.

The Wartime political atmosphere has favored conservatives and the Republican Party. The Republican parties traditional American values coupled with Republican war hawkish rhetoric and boastful nationalism make the party more powerful during the war on terror. The contemporary Republican Party does not seek for political engagement by the American citizens, nor they center the party on the needs for the people.<sup>47</sup> The Republican Party has become highly corporatized and antidemocratic. Routinely Republican politicians condemn popular demonstrations, and actively push to promote the interest and protections of their corporate allies. The war on terror has seen the Republican Party work to seize total control of Washington. Wolin describes this Republican push for control to be “an element of imperial ruthlessness.”<sup>48</sup> Wolin is not exaggerating in his description. Like empires, citizens are not major actors in republican politics. This is made clear by the parties push to defund programs that are specifically geared to promote the general welfare of the people, while they pour money into the military and remove the restraints put on the corporate backers. Republican power has become encompassing, making the Democratic Party look like an opposition party. Republicans have captured the monopoly on war and aggression. This is most evident in the ridicule that was given to Obama on being on terror, even though he has bombed and

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<sup>47</sup> Wolin, Sheldon. *Democracy Incorporated*, 195.

<sup>48</sup> Wolin, Sheldon. *Democracy Incorporated*, 193

droned more terrorist than his predecessor. In the years of the war on terror we have seen the bending and disregard of rules by the Republican Party and the continued effort to prop up corporations rather than engage the citizenry. This contemporary party does not recognize the ideal of democracy and the need for it to be an engagement of citizen and government. The question of how we judge legitimacy constantly comes up when looking at actions taken by the Republican Party and the United States government as a whole. If we are to be truly democratic then there needs to be a felt sensation of democracy. If parties alienate the people from the very participation that makes us democratic then we cannot think of ourselves as such. The political actions demonstrated during the duration of the war on terror have become imperial and authoritative in nature. While the political process has stayed intact, government itself has expanded power and form, by propelling the executive and bolstering branches of government that do not promote the prosperity or engagement of the citizen. In our attempt to expand our power outward, the feeling of democracy has been discontinued. When issues of the day are focused on subjects that are not compatible to the knowledge of the everyday citizen they lose their ability to thoughtfully engage and participate in democracy. Empire substitutes everyday citizens with elites and specialists. The normal citizen is removed from the discourse about his or her very own country. Political participation, which was once thought to be an essential element of American democracy, is no longer needed during the war on terror. The loss of participation has turned Americans into apolitical subjects rather than citizens.

Like all imperial aims economics lie at the heart of conquest. America has long sought to turn nations into democracies, in order to promote not only free government,

but also more importantly free enterprise. The National Security Strategy (NSS) for the U.S. explicitly lays out the twin goals of democracy and free markets:

“Finally, the United States will use this moment of opportunity to extend the benefits of freedom across the globe. We will actively work to bring the hope of democracy, development, free markets, and free trade to every corner of the world.”<sup>49</sup>

The economic goals of the War on terror and of imperialism greatly hamper the democratic society. Looking at the language of the NSS its clear that the War on Terror was seen as an opportunity for economic expansion. Hobson asserts the belief that market place elites are the chief promoters of imperialist policy. Like the market place elites Hobson looks at liberal politicians and how they fall to imperialism due to the same interests as their market place counter parts. “That they are not conscious traitors or hypocrites may be readily conceded, but the fact remains that they have sold the cause of popular reform, which was their rightful heritage, for an imperialism which appealed to their business interests and their social prepossessions.”<sup>50</sup> Hobson shows that one party or one faction does not drive imperialism.

Rather imperialism is a joint effort by elites. The loss of liberals to imperialism Hobson would say creates a void for the citizens. As the champions of social reform, liberals who become joined in the imperialist mission cannot act as they would if empire was not the goal. Empire focuses the economy of expansion and protection. The politics of imperialism come first. These politics are so time consuming that they leave little

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<sup>49</sup> Bush, George. “The National Security Strategy of the United Sates of America” (2002).

<sup>50</sup> Hobson, A. J. *Imperialism: A Study*, 144.

room for the discussion and funding of domestic reform. The political climate that Hobson describes in his study of British imperialism connects greatly to the present state of the U.S. The war on terror has created a power shift. Wolin argues that there was a time when power of the government was derived from its citizens, which thusly gave justification to government power.<sup>51</sup> Wolin goes on to make the point that the power of the U.S. government is no longer a source for political power for the people. The power they once had is now turned for a different purpose and that is political and economic freedom. The political and economic freedoms are meant to build prosperity but we see that when corporations become conjoined with government freedom and democracy take the backseat to economic power. This new conjoined power of politics and economics can be berthed by the political demobilization seen in the attempt to expand empire. The Ideas of neoliberals and neoconservatives is thus combined during the time of war. Corporations are given more freedom, at the expense of the people and the military is bolstered also at the expense of the citizen.

As political elites and corporations continue to mold themselves as one we see how the power of corporations has grown, and where the heads of the corporations have gone into the political realm. While the attempt of creating democracy in Iraq has failed, corporations have still seen benefits from this prolonged war. The Iraq war has seen an unprecedented amount of private enterprise entering the War zone. Many of these

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<sup>51</sup> Wolin, Sheldon, *Democracy Incorporated*, 18.

corporations were able to get government contracts from the U.S. without competition. Halliburton has received the most money. The company was given \$39.5 billion in Iraq-related contracts over the past decade, with many of the deals given without any bidding from competing firms, such as a \$568-million contract renewal in 2010 to provide housing, meals, water and bathroom services to soldiers a deal that was believed to be ripe of corruption.<sup>52</sup> What must also be noted is that former vice president Dick Cheney was the former CEO of Halliburton. The ushering in of Halliburton into Iraq and Cheney's former position with the company and his position in the U.S. government are prime examples of Wolin's "Inverted Totalitarianism"<sup>53</sup> Simply inverted totalitarianism is when corruptions subvert democracy and economics come to trump politics. Both corporations and government conjoin to achieve both groups' aims. Through the guise of the war on terror, the bush administration was able to create a space of political paralysis to aid its economic partners. Liberal economic reform took place easing the tax and regulatory burdens of elites and corporations. Social reform took a back seat. The money that could be used to promote domestic advancement had been turned over to the war effort. As the government paid out contracts, the American people spent billions in tax dollars that allowed these companies to turn a profit off the war. The economics like the

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<sup>52</sup> Rosenbaum, E. David. "A Closer Look at Cheney and Halliburton." The New York Times, September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

<sup>53</sup> Wolin, Sheldon. *Democracy Incorporated*, 41.

politics of empire look outside the state. The needs and wants of the citizens come second to the needs and wants of the government and the elites who back the imperial policy.

With Iraq posing little to no existential threat to the U.S. I believe that the United States chose to invade and topple a sovereign nation for the benefit of corporate giants, in their attempt to restructure the Iraqi economy according to the free market. This joint effort by the government and the market shows that the market is no longer separated from state power. It is not possible to have democracy when the market and corporations can act as a hidden hand in public policy. Ultimately the democratization project of Iraq failed. Creating a vacuum for terrorists and fertile ground for the growth of anti-American sentiment. This failed action increased our war time table, and while the long war will see a loss of men and women, and the continued squeeze on the American people, corporations will still see returns and the continued economic deregulation.

Like the economy imperialism promotes the military. Hobson writes on the need for imperial states to have strong militaries.<sup>54</sup> While the U.S. may not be directly engaging with states over the possession of territory, the global war on terror has led to a boost in military funding and military expansion. Oversees the military does not fall to the will of the people. As the War on terror creates Americas quest for empire the militant nature and mindset are brought back home. The job of a soldier is not to die, but

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<sup>54</sup> Hobson, A. J. *Imperialism: A Study*, 147.



to kill. This very notion is completely antithetical to democratic society and the democratic imaginary.

Militarism and the military have crept into everyday domestic life. The notion of patriotism and being a patriot has been shaped by the aggressions and mindset of soldiers in foreign battlegrounds. We see this militarization is prominent in domestic policing. Over the past decade police have come to more and more resemble soldiers. The creation of the militant cop is rooted in the War on Terror. Pre 9/11 the police were mainly responsible for the domestic terror threat, today the military is heading that battle. To better prepare themselves in the dealing with terrorism, police forces throughout the country have purchased military equipment, adopted military training, and sought to create a "soldier's mentality" among their ranks. With a soldier's mentality and the weapons to go along with it, the lines between police officer and soldier are being blurred. When thinking of democracy as a lived experience, the creation and presence of the "soldier cop" changes how Americans live in their democracy. The presence of military grade armor and weapons sends a message to the citizen. In the attempt to equip police with militarized materials, federal agencies such as the Department of Defense, and Homeland Security have changed the culture of policing to fit the narrative of War. Units such as Swat teams present the clearest picture of the warrior cop. They are trained as soldiers, and have the equipment that would be seen in warzones. Hobson writes in his study of imperialism that the training of a soldier is completely antagonistic to

democracy.<sup>55</sup> Police, who are supposed to be peacekeepers, have turned into sudo-soldiers. Due to the increased military size and production the federal government has an excess of military good that when given to police, they are forced to use. Its not only the weapons that make the police act as if they were extensions of the military but rather their actions in the field of duty. Due to the inability to combat terrorism on American soil police forces across the country have armed themselves with a stockpile of military grade equipment. Through Homeland Security grants to local law enforcement agencies and the Department of Defense's 1033<sup>56</sup> program Police forces have been able to acquire not only guns and ammunition, but armored cars, aircraft, and watercraft. I believe that the militarized police force projects power onto the communities they patrol. Armored cars and automatic weapons serve no purpose in ideal policing. Before 9/11 police forces rarely received armored vehicles and M4's. Officers routinely walk their beats wearing battle gear carrying assault rifles. The policing force becomes one of occupation when it is militarized. Communities being controlled by the new cop hybrid are attacked with the images of rifle carrying soldiers, identical to those living in American occupied territory in the Middle East. The images thus create a dichotomy; the free citizen is living in what has become a police occupied territory. It is not surprising that the police would become stand ins for the military at home. Empires are based on domination. The democratic

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<sup>55</sup> Hobson, A. J. *Imperialism: A Study*, 134.

<sup>56</sup> Aclu.org. "War Comes Home: The Excessive Militarization of American Policing" (April, 2017), 22.

system that is in place in the U.S. is not ideally set up for totalitarian rule but the state can project its dominance in American communities using highly militarized police forces. This act falls in line with Wolin's argument that imperial politics represent the conquest of domestic politics. And it is not a surprise that the militarism that is used abroad has come home to produce itself through law enforcement.

The militarization of policing culture is also apparent in the training that tactical teams receive—SWAT team members are trained to think like soldiers. To be trained as a soldier for a job that is meant for peacekeeping changes the mindset of police officer. Police generally operate in peaceful areas, furthermore police are expected to follow the rule of law and solve issues using the complex legal system. Police officers are also supposed to view even suspects as innocent until proven guilty. Soldiers on the other hand do not have the same mind set as traditional police.<sup>57</sup> Instead of seeing citizens as those they are meant to protect soldiers have two categories of people, enemies and non-enemies. Soldiers also have to make that distinction in are, where they are seen as an occupying force. I do not think that officers carrying military weapons and armor will kill civilians but When police officers are dressed like soldiers, armed like soldiers, and trained like soldiers, it's not surprising that they are beginning to act like soldiers.

The increase in SWAT units post 9/11 has also adds to this undemocratic style of policing. SWAT prior to 9/11 were found primarily in the largest American cites,

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<sup>57</sup> Aclu.org. "War Comes Home: The Excessive Militarization of American Policing" (April, 2017), 25

contrast that with today as we see SWAT units in almost every American police department. These SWAT teams originally used to deal with severe danger, today now are called upon for minor operations, such as serving warrants. SWAT teams act as if they were soldiers raiding an enemy combatants hideout. They use battering ramps, tear gas, and other military weapons and tactics to perform their sweeps and raids. While warrants are technically necessary for these SWAT raids to be done, there has been a steady disintegration of 4<sup>th</sup> amendment rights due to the courts and the Patriot Act. SWAT teams can use “no knock”<sup>58</sup> warrants or even barge into home without a warrant under the suspicion of criminal activity (usually drugs). Supreme court cases have further justified and protected this behavior by SWAT teams even justifying physical harm. Many of these cases that have expanded the rights of SWAT and limited the rights of citizens have come to the court in the years of the war on terror. The courts ruling on these cases have created a new source of undemocratic and unchecked power for law enforcement. What should also be noted is history of racist policing. SWAT teams disproportionately raid and serve warrants to minorities in low-income communities. While the targeting of minorities by law enforcement is not new it does play into the militarism created by war and empire. This policing strategy Hobson would say falls inline with imperial states. As the imperial states work to seize territory controlled by weaker states, the practice is thus brought back home and implemented on the weakest

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<sup>58</sup> Aclu.org. “War Comes Home: The Excessive Militarization of American Policing” (April, 2017), 14.

citizens of the imperial state. With imperialism working as an authoritative, and oligarchic practice domestically, the police who are meant to serve the people, no longer do. Police are given power to act undemocratically and militaristically. No longer protecting and serving, the militarized police force of the U.S. now acts as a military agency.

Militarism has seen an increased presence in democratic institutions during the duration of the war on terror. Bush, Obama, and now Trump have all had ex military officials in their cabinets. Today President Trump has tapped more ex military elites than any president before him. In a time of war and conflict it makes sense to see why a president would want to have some guidance by someone who has served time in the armed forces. It is not to say that every ex general is a war hawk looking to decimate the Middle East, but their primary training and for many generals their lives have revolved around war and war alone. As these generals attempt to advise the president their training and mindset are one nurtured by the arts of warfare not of diplomacy. Having too many generals could a one track way of thinking, putting force at the front to diplomacy and foreign affairs and leaving discussion on peaceful conflict resolution to the way side. As the War on Terror continues its has become more apparent that fighting has not lessened the urge for terrorist to spring up and cause harm to civilians. Ex military officials only know one way of dealing with aggression from the enemy, thus we are in continued war. Having a diversified group of people advising the president, especially concerning

manners of aggression, would create a broader spectrum of ideas on how to handle the war on terror.

Conclusion:  
What of the future?

“At the end of the day, we must go forward with hope and not backward by fear and division.”

-Jesse Jackson

In my attempt to show the erosion of the democratic imaginary during the war on terror, the picture painted has been dark. The sickening feelings that overwhelmed the American people on 9/11 have been projected across globe. In our attempt to secure the state our government has taken an undemocratic turn. This war on terror has come to be more than an operation to destroy terrorism but an attack on democracy. Emotions have been used as political tools. The politics of fear have been used on the American people. Through fear the once vibrant and active citizenry have been silenced. Outlets for democracy such as the press have been bought and now work for the elites that they used to combat. When terror showed its face to America on 9/11, national crises did not mobilize us. 9/11 and the feelings that were birthed that day were not used to unify the people. The new world that emerged from the ashes of 9/11 has little room for true democracy.

While the democratic imaginary, and thusly democracy have been weakened by the war on terror, I find it important to offer prescriptions for this democratic erosion. In an attempt at remedying the problem of democratic erosion, I look to the most important faction in our democracy, the American people. My first prescription asks Americans to change their mindset on terrorism and challenge the terrorist imaginary. Citizens put up with crime all the time. From petty crimes to murder, citizens have come to build up a

tolerance to crime. What if we no longer viewed terrorism as an extra-ordinary crime? We must all drop our superstitions regarding terrorism. While its random nature and flair for brutal violence is scary, why can we not stand courageous to it? If we begin to treat terrorism like murder then we can stop our fear. Fear of terrorism can no longer be used as a political tool if the American people begin to stand up to their fears, and face terror with courage. Terror would lose its mysticism under this new way of thinking. No longer would terror accomplish its goals of fear and drama. The affect of terrorism would no longer be so paralyzing, but like most crimes the American people would be able to continue their lives without existential fear. If we change our mindsets on terrorism the American populace would be reawakened and end the trade democracy for security.

My second prescription calls for a political movement against the war on terror. While we have seen movements that opposed the Iraq War, and even fewer against the war in Afghanistan, there has been no political movement to end the war on terror as a whole. Politically there is no debate on the war on terror. From the furthest corners of the left to the furthest corners of the right, Washington has collectively agreed that America has a problem with terror. This political movement in opposition of the war on terror would argue how destructive the war on terror has been on Americans. This movement would argue against increased executive power, the expansion of the American military, and the American super power as a whole. The movement would also attempt to end the war on terror to re focus our aims on the state. The anti war movement would want to focus itself an Americans and American communities. It would want to use the everyday experiences of Americans to better govern and better serve the people. The anti war on terror movement would encourage the people to be active in the movement. I see this



group engaging in protests and marches. Holding town hall meetings to better understand the views of its members. The movement would not only ask for the people's votes but also attempt to show the people the darkest sides of the war on terror. The movement would both educate and engage its followers. I see this being a very inclusive movement. I see this movement having a large coalition. It would be comprised of Muslim Americans, Black Americans, White Americans, and immigrants. The war on terror has infected so much of American policy. Many if not all oppressed groups would want to ban with the anti war movement. In contemporary politics this movement would be branded as anti American. The popular and only discourse around the war on terror presents an "us versus them" scenario. For the movement to be against the war on terror would go against the established imaginary of the time. Like most opposition movements today, this anti war movement would be vilified. It would have no established party allies; this would force this group to be centered on the people. I believe that even if the movement were not to end the war on terror, having a major and visible movement opposing the war on terror would broaden the depth of the discourse that we currently have surrounding the war on terror. Furthermore this movement would directly aid the democratic imaginary, as it would be a movement that was based off the activity of its members. Unlike the established political parties, this movement would be free of corporate elites. This group would find its success on not how much money was brought in or in how many members of its movement could be elected, but it would find its success on creating demos against the war on terror.

My final prescription is the undoing of super power. American super power has spread the nation too thin. It is not possible for the U.S. to be the world's supreme

enforcer and still hold on to democracy. What we know of superpower is that it has created many of our enemies. In our attempt to seize power we have encroached upon many of the peoples of the world. We have placed our military in every corner of the world. Super power has turned the U.S into the world's leader in consumption and thus pollution. By the U.S. losing super power the world would become more habitable for others. To lessen our power may seem to be counterproductive but our power is the reason we need security. If we chose to act in concert with the nations of the world instead of their conductor many of the animosities that have led to the creation of terrorist would cease to exist. Instead of forcing "our" way on the people of the world, the lessening of super power would lead to interaction on a higher and deeper level. We would work with others to learn more about their culture and history. Our world is globalised that is not wrong nor will it cease. In an age of exceptional communication and information gathering, an American state that does not seek total power would no longer be looked at as an encroaching force or bully but rather a friend to the international community. Ending super power would make us weaker, but maybe through weakness we can find strength. While we might be open to more attacks as super power is weakened we might end our fantasies with terrorism and find the courage to combat it. As military support is cut, we will be more vulnerable in the short run. But believe that American super power create more conflict than it solves. I believe that by weakening ourselves we will find ourselves in less conflict. Our enemies of today would cease to hate us once super power has been lost. No longer would we be a symbol of monolithic superpower. Ending global super power would also bring the focus of politics back to the U.S. the people would again be at the center of democracy. With the burden of war gone

America and Americans could return to bettering our democracy. For any of this to occur super power must first be challenged by the American people. Americans must look at America through a critical lens. Here they will see the atrocities have occurred under the name of superpower. Americans will also have to confront our own holds on super power. Are we ready as a people to give that up?

I will end my research with three questions for the future and further study. First I wonder how the international community would respond to the end of the war on terror? Under the current administration I do not see an end to this war. I sadly do not think that the end of the war on terror is coming anytime soon. I believe that war on terror and our place in that war has been cemented in the minds of all Americans. Until we collectively find an alternative to war we will fight in the deserts for years to come. Maybe those who were forced into migration due to the war could return home and return back to their ways of life. If the U.S. leaves the Middle East, what will happen of the war torn nations? Who will Israel turn to for economic and military support? What of our deal with the Saudi's? Maybe another powerful nation like China might step in and take the place of the U.S. A positive view of the future might imagine a world of peace. A realist might assume that nothing would change, that another war would replace the one we ended. What I do know is that an official end to the war on terror would create anew world. For sixteen years we have lived in a world of war, the end of war would mark the end of that world.

Next I look to the Muslim question. Norton in her study provides evidence that the Muslim question should not be a question at all, and that its presence is undemocratic. While her argument is convincing I still wonder of the Muslim questions future. Why is

the Islamic faith seen so counter to American democracy and ideals? Muslims are not new to America and neither is their culture. Like Norton I look at the Muslim question with relation to the Jewish question. Jews have become so intertwined with American culture, which the two cultures have come to diffuse with one another. From food to language Jews have come to be culturally accepted as Americans. Why has this not been the same for Muslims? I attribute this in part to history. There is a history especially in Europe of Muslim occupation. The years in which Muslim Moors controlled Europe have not been forgotten, and today with so many arrivals of Muslim refugees, this history of occupation is being used to combat arriving Muslims. I also attribute this lack of acceptance to race. The Jews who came to America post World War Two were predominantly white and economically stable. Jews thus were able to gain acceptance and later inclusion into the white race. For Muslims this is not as easy. The Muslim of the Middle East has been racialized. His brown hue and features have been casted as other, making it harder to gain acceptance. The racialization of Muslims in America has become almost second nature. I see this most in the medias portrayal of Muslims. The Muslims we are shown, the ones who we are supposed to fear are overwhelmingly Middle Eastern brown Muslims. White Muslims have seemed to evade the negative portrayal that their peers from the Middle East have experienced. The Muslim question is quite complex and its future is hard to pinpoint, recently we have seen action in support of Muslims in the U.S. The multiple striking downs of President Trumps travel ban show me that steps are being taken to ensure Muslims rights. What are more exciting are the protests that occurred in airports around the nation concerning the ban. People chose to stand together in opposition to the government. I cannot tell what the future of the Muslim question will

be but, I can say the future will not be dominated by one force. The Muslim question and its answer will only come to light when America begins to look at its history and the questions concerning each of the groups that call America home. Ultimately the Muslim question is not a question of Muslims at all but rather a questioning of America.

Lastly I wonder if Americans are capable of letting go of super power. Super power has aided Americans in no other ways but prestige. I believe that we do like our position on the world stage. While it has been shown that super power can be coercive and even destructive, I do believe there is a sense of safety provided by super power. Ultimately citizens will have to grapple with the questions of security and freedom, and whether they are willing to face an uncertain world with courage in the absence of super power or continue to fall to the perversion that is American super power.

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