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Zubida Jalalzai & David Jefferess (Eds.). *Globalizing Afghanistan: Terrorism, War, and the Rhetoric of Nation Building*. Durham & London: Duke University Press. 2011.

This book is a product of the 2002 Rhode Island College October Series, an annual lecture series organized by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and the text bears the traces of a humanities program. Jalalzai is an associate professor of English at the college, specializing in postcolonial theory and American literature; Jefferess is an assistant professor of English and cultural studies at the University of British Columbia. They believe that by examining Afghanistan through the lens of globalization, they will provide new insights into the problems of that country. The conference and the text were products of the George W. Bush presidency and reflect a general discontent with that administration's policies, which now seem ever more clearly to reflect arrogance, pretense, ignorance, and folly.

Nigel C. Gibson, director of the honors program at Emerson College, tackles the drug industry problem in Afghanistan. Opium, a major driver of the economy, employs nearly three million people, poppy production since 2001 having increased by 1500%. More than seven years after the invasion of Afghanistan, the attempts to remove Al Qaeda and establish a more humane government have, he believes, failed. Moreover, he thinks the only way Afghanistan can pay for its own development is by taxing its drug money. He places the beginning of the "narcopolitical economy" in the late 1970s, which is a little early: The CIA did not begin shoveling money to the mujahedin until early 1980s.

Rodney J. Steward, assistant professor of history at the University of South Carolina, in the chapter "Afghanistan in a Globalized World," reviews the history of the country, arguing that nineteenth century international involvements in the country were "global" encounters. His terminology is anachronistic, but it fits the theme.

Altaf Ullah Khan, assistant professor of journalism and mass communications at the University of Peshawar, contributes the chapter "The Afghan Beat: Pukhtoon Journalism and the Afghan War, examining the practices of both Western Journalists and Pukhtoon journalists on both sides of the border. He says that Pukhtoon journalists being trained by Western journalists "are being reoriented from reporting on war to reporting on development projects and conflict management and resolution." And as part of this process efforts have been made to bring together Pukhtoon journalists from both Afghanistan and Pakistan to develop new journalistic formats. . . ." The result is that the ethnically Pukhtoon professionals in the two countries" were being drawn more closely together. He connects this project to the shifting interests of Western journalists, from "nation building," to the "war on terror," and more recently to development issues in the context of civil war. For its part, says Kahn, Pakistani-journalism in the last couple of decades has undergone "greater media globalization," and not always to the good. Radio stations have proliferated, "each propagating its own brand of hatred," so that local and international perspectives have sharply differed. It has been difficult to synthesize them; indeed it has been dangerous to try to bring them together. Local journalists, being Pukhtoons themselves, have homes and connections in the tribal areas where so much conflict takes place, are so are personally invested in affairs in the region: no longer observers, their "own house[s] are] on fire." Not only do local journalists face personal challenges as they cover stories, the Taliban often intimidate journalists in order to make sure they tell the Taliban version of the story. At the same time Western members of the media do their fair share of exploiting local journalists as well, "[buying their] services for a few dollars, and then [selling] the stories [for] tens of thousands."

Khan asserts that local journalists believe Western interest in such stories has much to do with Western interests themselves. For this reason, perhaps, Peshawar, the main city in the tribal areas, has become “the most important media center in Pakistan.” According to Khan, the efforts of Western journalists to train Pushtun journalists have earned them little respect: Local journalists “no longer believe in the integrity of the Western media.” They now believe Western interests are driven by the “hunt for energy resources, cheap labor, and markets,” and they believe that global hegemony “controls and manages dissent . . .” (84). They doubt that “the Afghan war was [ever] against ‘terrorism,’” and they regard terms such as “crusades,” “Islamic militants,” “militant Islam,” as humiliating simplifications” (90). Many of them have little hope for the future of Afghanistan.

Gwen Bergner, associate professor of English at West Virginia University, writes in her submission, “Women’s Liberation and the War in Afghanistan,” that the way in which Afghanistan’s women are described in the Western media reflects “the gendering of nationalism [within] a global frame” (96) and quotes approvingly Lauren Berlant, who says that, “[D]emocracies can . . . produce a special form of tyranny that makes citizens like children” Bergner believes the Americans in Afghanistan see themselves as “rescuing, not conquering hero[es]” (98). She mistakenly says the US “supported the [Taliban] regime, despite the regime’s intensified crackdown on women’s rights, so as to garner cooperation for building an oil pipeline that would benefit an American company” (102). More accurately, an American company paid former government officials to represent their interests with the Taliban in 1996, but the government gave no “support” to the Taliban. Admittedly, they almost did, until American feminists persuaded it to do otherwise [See Rashid, *Taliban*]. Her real point is thus: “If terrorism signifies covert, small-scale, even domestic warfare against ‘us’ as a nation, then the veiled Muslim woman is paradoxically and metonymically coded as both a victim of Islamic orthodoxy and a sign of clandestine terrorist tactics that are now largely synonymous with the Islamic world in much American discourse” (111).

Maliha Chishti, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Toronto specializing in the study of Afghan women, and Cheshmak Farhoumand-Sims, an assistant professor in conflict studies at St. Paul University in Ottawa, combine their efforts to further examine attempts to help the women of Afghanistan, exploring “the intersections between the transnational feminist apparatus and the Afghan women’s movement...” (119). There is virtually no “woman’s movement” in Afghanistan, which the authors regret, and they wonder why feminists from the outside have little impact on the condition of Afghan women. They want “a new communicative and political practice” to be “forged among women across their diversities that works in principled solidarity and critically moves away from the traps of new-imperialism” (121). They object to the “relentless and sensationalist images of burqa-clad Afghan women” in the Western media (122) and accuse the Western “the feminist campaign” of “constructing a singular, monolithic Afghan Woman, whose agency and heterogeneity is appropriated and controlled to advance a neo-imperialist agenda as part of the war against terror” (123). Yet the authors themselves go on to make certain generalizations of their own, telling the reader that “...forced marriages, domestic violence, threats and intimidations, kidnappings, honor killings, and daily harassments are all major obstacles to the safety and security of women across the country” (126). Additionally, their uncited claim that “during the Taliban period, Afghanistan received on average U.S. \$250-- million annually in aid...” (125) confuses the Taliban with the mujahedin, whom the Americans supplied with large sums in the 1980s; the US gave no aid to the Taliban.

Kamran Rastegar, assistant professor of Arabic literature at Tufts University, contributed the chapter “The Iranian Meditation of Afghanistan in International Art House Cinema after September 11, 2001” and says most of the best films on Afghanistan in the last decade have been directed or produced by Iranians. He notes that the press releases about some such films imply that the relationship between Iranian directors and Afghan actors is one in which the Iranians enjoy “superiority” and provide “supervision” to their Afghan actors. He also points out some implicit messages in *The White Balloon*, in which he sees the “film’s delicate positioning of the Afghan character among a wide range of other, often socially marginalized characters” as a commentary on “the mutability” of national identity in Iran. Iranian films of Afghan subjects, like *Baran* for instance, he says, “raise questions that were perceived to be intimately critical of specifically Iranian social norms or political policies.” Because the Taliban condemned any and all representations, Afghanistan became a “land without images and representations,” “a land without a face.” The American invasion in 2001 motivated one Iranian director to produce *Journey to Kandahar*, which attracted little interest until September 11, 2001, when it was suddenly in great demand, but Rastegar sees the film as a commentary on Iranian politics. The contradictions and hypocrisies of life under the Taliban become metaphors for life under the Iranian Shiite regime. He examines the subtexts of the widely acclaimed film *Osama*, which was pitched toward international audiences. In it, the cameraman is identified (although unseen) and is later executed by the Taliban – something the Taliban never actually did.

Imre Szeman, Canada Research Chair of Cultural Studies at the University of Alberta, asks in the conclusion what an intellectual can do to help the situation in Afghanistan. He suggests that we must “assume the social responsibility of translating our specialized knowledge in ways that inform the public, contribute to policy discussions, and . . . show university administrators and state legislators the potential importance of the humanities” (169). He recommends that rather than becoming “caught up in the immediacy of events,” academics should “focus on long-term analyses and on an assessment of the limits (and possibilities) of existing social structures and institutions. . . . [T]hey should do their work as academics . . . [and so] make the university fulfill its promise as a site of knowledge production...” (171).

Szeman also tells us in the conclusion that several of the authors had “cultural connections” with Afghanistan but were writing “from a distance,” “trying to understand Afghanistan’s current place within global political, cultural, and economic networks” (168). The reader will notice.

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