

# Antipode

A Radical Journal of Geography

**Laleh Khalili**, *Time in the Shadows: Confinement in Counterinsurgencies*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013. ISBN: 9780804778329 (cloth); ISBN: 9780804778336 (paper); ISBN: 9780804783972 (ebook)

Laleh Khalili's latest book is an important contribution to a growing constellation of critical intellectual work around global counterinsurgency campaigns and asymmetrical warfare in the era of the "war on terror". Liberal warfare holds up ideals of human rights while it enacts more coercive and lethal violence, often in the name of democracy building. Sometimes it is even called "humanitarian warfare". What distinguishes liberal warfare is its elaborate appeal to law and legality in the administration of just war, and the ways that it renders political conflicts as technical problems to be solved (p.4-5).

The book is a study of today's two major liberal counterinsurgencies, the United States and Israel, and it focuses specifically on the practices of confinement and detention they employ. Often these practices expose the deep contradictions of the liberal tenant of freedom of movement in the context of wars waged through corralling and controlling large noncombatant populations (p. 5-6).

*Time in the Shadows* probes the assertions of counterinsurgency theorists and practitioners at the forefront of the shadowy intelligence world creating semi-secret, extraterritorial prisons, proxy detention camps, and mass civilian enclaves like Gaza. It is organized as an assemblage across time, place and space, weaving contemporary accounts of people violently caught up in these carceral systems with extensive archival research tracing the operational, ideological and historical contours of these developments. This thorough political sociology offers generative ways of theorizing the spatial implications of sovereignty enacted through contemporary forms of indirect rule

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and technocratic governance.

Historically, asymmetrical warfare and liberal counterinsurgency methods have been used to quell anticolonial resistance and as a tool of occupation. Khalili uses the U.S. *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* as the basis of the book's comprehensive and global conceptual mapping of counterinsurgency, tracing U.S., British, and French military engagements in the Philippines, Malaya, Algeria, Vietnam, Nicaragua, Indochina, Northern Ireland, South Africa, Aden and beyond, exploring how old imperial playbooks inform the practices of the United States and Israel in creating the latest ethico-legal armature of counterinsurgency tactics. Each chapter systematically unpacks the legal, administrative, and physical mechanisms of contemporary counterinsurgency confinement practices, which claim a "population as the prize", an object of both war and civic action (p.43).

Chapter three examines the antecedents of extraterritorial detention in the Guantánamo Bay detention camp, considering the spatialities of "black sites" beyond the sovereign borders of counterinsurgent states and the ways in which jurisdictions of violence are legally extended to the point where even individual bodies can become islands of sovereignty (p.100). Chapter four is a study of regimes of invisibility and secrecy in practices of rendition and proxy-run prisons. It examines several cases including the Israeli-run Khiyam prison in Lebanon, a colonial prison first built by the French in the 1930s, which during the 1980s served as an interrogation center which employed proxy Lebanese enforcers (p.106). Chapter five looks at the transformation of detention into a set of procedures and protocols in Abu Ghraib. And, finally, chapter six examines settler colonial counterinsurgency, focusing on the creation Palestinian enclaves—looking at the ways that indigenous inhabitants are removed, entrapped, and

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even interned to facilitate indigenous land appropriation. Walls, death zones, and security zones are critical infrastructures for socially engineering complainant and legible populations in these contexts.

Khalili empirically draws out the ways in which the standard of civilization is crucial to these systems of carceral rule, and attendant to the ways in which “a racial hierarchy resolves the tensions between illiberal methods and liberal discourse” (p.4-5). Her work foregrounds the contradictions of “securing” and “protecting” populations through the expansion of military freedoms to legally enact violence as a form of just war. Liberal war-making becomes a managerial matrix of “best practices” that codifies immeasurable violence inside a legal-moral calculus of the lesser evil (see Weizman 2011). This account also troubles the ever-blurring line between civilian and combatant in counterinsurgency warfare, a characterization that ends up administratively and legally encircling and enclosing both figures as a single population. Khalili raises important political questions about the criminalization of insurgency and the spheres of political action in asymmetrical warfare. When counterinsurgent state violence and coercion occur inside the frames of democratizing and “civilizing” missions they are legally couched either in the realms of humanitarian efforts or plausible deniability.

The strength of this ambitious project lies in the depth and breadth of its historical engagement with the continuities and circulations of the “micro-practices” of counterinsurgency. It is a useful genealogical resource not only for people writing and thinking about contemporary questions around the planetary “war on terror”, but also yields important insights for scholars working around questions of governance, citizenship, sovereignty, migration, the global carceral-industrial complex, border management, and security.

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The parameters of the book's engagement with confinement are well-defined, but the force of some of the theoretical contributions it offers are perhaps strongest when put in conversation with other recent texts that contemplate the changing spatialities of warfare, particularly in relationship to the circulating and "vertical sovereignty" of military air power, also a practice of counterinsurgency first tested inside colonial spaces (see Lindqvist 2002; Weizman 2007). The techno-legal intersections of detention and drones in counterinsurgency warfare can be considered ethico-spatially through the ways in which distance becomes a "moral buffer" (Chamayou 2013, discussed in Gregory 2013). The invisible and secret detention centers that Khalili describes are an integral component in the landscapes of wars conducted from afar, which destroy from a safe distance and require what Derek Gregory (2011: 195) calls a tactical "hypervisibility". When these oppositional spheres of unlimited mobility and confinement are considered together, it opens up a rich space for temporal and spatial discussions around visibility/invisibility and other material and legal dimensions of liberal forms of violence. Finally, this book continues to serve as an excellent resource and sounding board for understanding the ongoing Israeli counterinsurgency warfare in Gaza, and in particular the "buffer zone" in Gaza.<sup>1</sup>

Frantz Fanon described the immobilizing spatialities of colonial rule as a world divided in compartments where borders are designated through the material violence of military barracks and police stations (2001: 29). He remarked that this geographical layout also marked the lines on which decolonized society would be reorganized and where the whole material and moral universe—a universe that we can locate today inside the ethical trappings of "humanitarian warfare" with its elaborate legal pedestals—is broken

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<sup>1</sup> For an interesting engagement with *Time in the Shadows* in the context of this see Gregory (2014).

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up (2001: 34). Khalili's work certainly helps to bring the compartments of confinement and lines of our contemporary moment into stark relief, making this also a valuable resource to contemplate future politics of liberation.

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