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Bodies, bombs and barricades: geographies of conflict and civilian (in)security

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This article critically examines the entanglements between 'security' and the geopolitical and geo-economic formations that assist in the cyclical continuation of conflict. The author questions the biopolitical configurations of state and private forms of militarised security. The author's approach to this research addresses the spatial and corporeal aspects of civilian security in contemporary conflicts zones – with a specific focus on Afghanistan. Drawing on the work of feminist political geographers, this article highlights the corporeal as a key site of analysis for the everyday and seemingly apolitical spaces occupied by civilians living amidst political conflict. This descriptive analysis of security and insecurity focuses on four specific areas: (1) Afghan civilian security measures, (2) domestic spaces as sites of security and violence, (3) mobile forms of security and insecurity and (4) the divergent perceptions and experiences of security/insecurity between international civilian workers living in Afghanistan and Afghan civilian citizens. While macro-scale analyses of security and civilian agency in various locations are important for geographic inquiry, it remains imperative that geographers and other social scientists examine the particularities of specific conflict sites and situations in order to avoid one-size-fits-all responses to or analyses of political conflict – and subsequently flattening civilian experiences through aggregated forms of knowledge production. This paper seeks to investigate several key aspects of feminist political geography by examining the multiple and varied experiences of the everyday within this conflict zone.

key words Afghanistan   geographies of security   feminist geopolitics   bodies   domestic spaces   gender

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Introduction

This article examines the spatial and corporeal aspects of civilian security in contemporary conflict zones, focusing specifically on Afghanistan. This analysis investigates the disparate methods for securing civilian life within this conflict zone in order to address the relationship between security and insecurity within a broad spectrum of violence. Drawing on the work of feminist political geographers, this analysis focuses on the everyday and seemingly apolitical sites and situations of civilian security, which are both gendered and operate at a corporeal scale (see Dowler and Sharp 2001). Additionally, scholars such as Roberts (2006) call for more discussion and research on civilian agency as

a part of rather than separate from human security. This empirical examination of civilians focuses on the body, buildings and barricade structures that represent security and insecurity, respectively. The article further investigates the movements and mobility of civilians and the importance of a spatial and contextual understanding of place as integral to one's security or lack thereof.

In support of Roberts' (2008) work on civilian insecurity, this article examines multiple forms of civilian agency in the pursuit of security, while seeking to challenge the politicised use of civilian bodies as potential (or actual) injuries and casualties. Roberts (2008) carefully examines structural forms of violence and includes the gap between wealthy and impoverished groups, and preventable

deaths (i.e. maternal and child mortality) as essential components of human insecurity in conflict areas. These vital aspects of human insecurity persist as acute challenges for civilians living in Afghanistan. The author recognises and acknowledges the links between physical violence and other forms of human security (see Roberts 2008), while this article specifically addresses threats to the body from political and/or domestic forms of physical violence.

The multiple security tactics employed by civilians in conflict zones are numerous and require continual alteration and revision. The descriptive analyses of security and insecurity included in this article emphasise four issues: (1) Afghan civilian security measures, (2) domestic spaces as sites of security and violence, (3) mobile forms of security and insecurity and (3) the divergent perceptions and experiences of security/insecurity between international civilian workers living in Afghanistan and Afghan civilian citizens. This article does not purport to provide an exhaustive summary of security tactics. Rather, this examination seeks to demonstrate how existing political hierarchies of corporeal value, the worth of bodies – and the politicisation of the bodies 'that count' (see Hyndman 2007) – are structurally realised in the design and implementation of both conventional and unconventional security measures.

The following includes an overview of the relevant scholarship on gender, security and conflict, and the recent theoretical focus (in geographic analyses of conflict) on biopower and legal exception. This leads to a subsequent overview of the literature on the body as a key site of geographic inquiry within contemporary political conflicts. Thus, it is also imperative to include the gendering of conflict-zone bodies as part of feminist geopolitical analysis.

Civilians, conflict and gendered security and insecurity

The 21st century began with several unresolved conflicts globally and in the post 9/11/01 era an increase (rather than decrease) in civil unrest and political violence globally. The current state of global politics has increased the militarisation of daily life, further blurring the lines between civilians and combatants (Bunch 2004). This includes the erasure of the boundaries between the public battlefield and private home front (Hyndman and De Alwis 2004).

The UN Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 1325, adopted in 2000, sets out to ensure efforts toward peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction. The UN's conceptualisations of security emerged from national security paradigms and international relations, which have significantly changed with the growth of corporate globalisation and violence by non-state actors (MacFarlane and Khong 2006). UNSCR-1325 is criticised for its inability to actually deliver the 'radical reforms' it 'purports to seek' (Sheppard 2008, 7).

In the case of Afghanistan, Schmeidl (2002) argues that UN policies aimed against the government during the Taliban regime also contributed to the continuation of war and extremism. Robinson (2005, 313) identifies the inability of marginalised communities to influence states as a key factor in their political marginalisation and insecurity. Within the bounds of a conflict, security becomes a decidedly spatialised and significantly contentious issue (such as, 'whose security is of concern, and to whom?') (Hyndman and De Alwis 2004, 535; also see Kleinfeld 2007). This has led other scholars to examine the state's use of violence and biopower in the control of its citizenry.

Biopower and state 'security'

Several studies by geographers examine the spatial aspects of biopolitics in conflict zones in order to regulate the placement and mobility of bodies. Flint *et al.* (2009) coin the term ConflictSpace as a method for describing the multiple spatialities associated with political violence. Other methods of corporeal control include what Alatout (2009) identifies as 'bio-territorial frameworks' for regulating and controlling spaces in Israel/Palestine. This occurs not only by the implementation of the separation wall, but also through the daily activities that require regular civilian engagement with this border in a series of conscripted regulatory practices. Similarly, links between security and the 'war on terror' provided a political opportunity for India to 'secure' its borders with Bangladesh based on anti-Muslim prejudices that produced a biopolitical exclusionary as a form of ensuring 'security' between states (Jones 2009). Political forces in Israel, Iraq and Bosnia have also employed the state apparatus for 'coercive spatial engineering' in order to develop ideal territorial and identity-driven borders (Ó Tuathail and Dahlman 2006). Conversely, peace activism in Israel/Palestine by

Women in Black rely on state-recognised public spaces in order express their critical and political resistance to violence (Blumen and Halevi 2009, 983). Security measures in the post 9/11/01 US were also marked by the increase of public surveillance (Amoore and Goede 2008; Katz 2007).

Securing bodies

Geographers also examine the use of protected bodies to provide mobile security for individuals vulnerable to acts of political violence (Henderson 2009; Koopman 2008). Henderson (2009) identifies the security strategy of 'protective accompaniment' in the transnational solidarity movement in Guatemala as a form of 'proxy citizenship'. She argues that accompaniment volunteers are able to influence conflict dynamics through their bodily presence by substituting their international bodies for local human rights defenders. Koopman highlights the racial and privileged markers placed onto the body in situations of accompaniment as the 'the imperialism that we carry within' (2008, 300). The body remains an important site of inquiry for understanding security and conflict in association with political, social, racial and economic corporeal markers.

Bodies and geographies of security and insecurity

Corporeal security, mediated by way of symbolic inscription, inevitably links human bodies to their integrated place within the social world (Truong *et al.* 2006, xiv). Bodies represent the most immediate and delicate scale of politics as corporeal sites and markers of gender and national identity (Hyndman and De Alwis 2004). Bodies are also shaped by imaginative geographies that

> fold distance into difference through a series of spatializations. They work … by multiplying partitions and enclosures that serve to demarcate 'the same' from 'the other'. (Gregory 2004, 17)

Imagined geographies reduce complexities and work toward legitimising exclusion and violence (Graham 2006; Gregory 2004). Tyner (2009) calls for situating the importance of research on bodies as subjects within conflicts in order to make bodies count rather than being represented as aggregate sums of war's collateral excess (also see Hyndman 2007). The politically discursive framing of gender during conflict illustrates several examples of corporeal geopolitics.

Gender politics and conflict

There is a distinct link between the re-configuration and demarcation of gender roles during wartime (Goldstein 2001). Men and women's experiences during political conflict vary significantly based on context, existing gender roles and the configuration of gender relations within military organisations (Jacobson 1999). For example, understanding gendered roles, relations and vulnerabilities is imperative for ensuring security (for men and women) in the design and planning of refugee campus (Giles and Hyndman 2004). Gendered abuse and exploitation often occur when displaced individuals are vulnerable both to political attacks against their bodies and in some cases additional sexual exploitation by aid workers or peacekeepers (Onyejekwe 2005). Following these concerns, Carpenter's (2006) analysis disrupts gendered assumptions about men during conflict by including male (non-combatant) victims of political violence. Carpenter also argues for the inclusion of males as partners in reducing gender-based violence during political conflict (rather than narrowly categorising men as perpetrators). Rhetorical missteps associated with the discursive use of gender while meaning 'women' remain part of the UN and other macro-scale approaches to ending gender-based violence, and continue to be mired in the political dialectics of gendered security/insecurity (Sheppard 2008).

Butler (2004) argues that the use of gendered and sexual violence during war purposely disrupts existing gendered frameworks and consequently reinforces (through violence) the boundaries that maintain the binary gender order. Truong *et al.* (2006) call for the full inclusion of feminism within social or intellectual movements in order to remedy the historic marginalisation and exclusion of gender from human security. Conversely, threats to women's security and rights caused by political unrest, extremism and religious fundamentalism have also been reconfigured for divergent political goals. For example, the US under the Bush administration invoked gender-based violence to 'demonize the "Islamic other" and justify more militarization of society' (Bunch 2004, 80). The popular use of 'western feminism' to reject Islam as misogynistic supported US aggressive foreign policy agendas, which rhetorically implemented the saving women trope to legitimise racist stereotypes of Islam (Bahramitash 2008; Sutton and Novkov 2008). This led to the use of the 'terrorist' label by governments

throughout the globe to forgo human rights in the name of providing for public or national security (Bunch 2004; also see Young 2003).

Thus, it is imperative that we address both the historical and contemporary baggage associated with co-optation of feminism by hegemonic (and other forms of) militarism, while also highlighting the transnational feminist efforts that address gender-based violence and insecurity (also see Enloe 2007; Oliver 2007; Riley *et al.* 2008). This includes broadening the gendered understanding of political conflict to include the multiple configurations of gendered bodies in conflict zones – i.e. as agents, victims and bystanders of violence (Moser and Clark 2001). It is also important to include gender and other forms of identity politics in the study of civilian–military operations (which have become a normative aspect of conflict aid/development). The growth of multinational corporations as partners in international state-based geopolitics and the neoliberalisation of aid/development include the growing use of Private Military Companies (PMCs) by both state and non-state actors. PMCs may also be labelled 'private security' organisations.

Privatised security and violence

International NGO projects in conflict zones increasingly network with governments, private contractors, logistics and private military companies (Duffield 2001). The privatisation of both security and aid/development has also created inextricable links between the networks that support war making and those that historically characterise peace (Goodhand 2006). Duffield and Waddell (2006) identify human security as a 'bio-political assemblage' at the nucleus of sovereignty with respect to states and the international community. They argue that the 'war on terror' repositioned 'home-land' populations at the centre of security discourse and practice rather than prioritising the security of humans living in states embroiled in political conflict (Duffield and Waddell 2006). These 'home-land' security practices are also mobilised for workers (from locations such as the North America and Europe) when they are transported to spaces of insecurity, such as Afghanistan, as civilian workers within the (civilian–military) aid/development sector.

Asymmetric (or insurgent) warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan contribute to hegemonic projects – as fear of 'terrorism' supplies a 'new' method for ral-

lying support to ultimately secure the interests of global capital and militarised expansion of the US (Luke 2007). Consequently, the growth of PMCs in Iraq and Afghanistan occur under the guise of 'security' without addressing the proliferation of weapons and corporate profits that fuel and influence the continuation of conflict (Musah 2002). McDonald (2002) argues that human security policies remain inconsistent with security practice in the international system. The meshing of military, security and humanitarian aid has prompted several critical analyses in geography, international relations and development studies (Bjork and Jones 2005; Carey and Richmond 2003; Duffield 2001; Goodhand 2006; Hyndman 2000).

In Afghanistan, security remains a central area of concern for civilians (also see Varughese 2007).

> Security is often defined in relation to the priorities of the Coalition, the Government or civilian assistance community, and not in terms of the perceptions of security and sources of threat experienced by the vast majority of Afghan citizens. (Bhatia *et al.* 2004)

The empirical examples in this paper will address some of these concerns and the disparate methods for determining, structuring and embodying security for international workers and Afghan civilians. In what follows, I briefly outline my research methods and some of the contemporary discussions and debates on security and aid/development in Afghanistan. This is followed by examples of security measures by international workers and military personnel in contrast to Afghan civilians and military/police. The subsequent analysis focuses on the spatial configurations and practices of security, public/private space and biopower, and how identity politics informs the conceptualisation and implementation of security for 'different' bodies (i.e. international aid/development workers, military personnel and Afghan civilians).

Research locations and methods

Kabul city, the capital of Afghanistan, generally operates as a security zone and operational centre for most international government and non-government organisations (NGOs). Conversely, the number of violent attacks in this city has increased in recent years. The aspects of civilian security/insecurity discussed in this article focus on Kabul city and eastern and northern provinces (Laghman, Nangrahar, Parwan, Baghlan and Takhar).

The information discussed here is based on confidential interviews with civilian employees (both Afghan nationals and internationals) of several government and non-government aid organisations – pseudonyms are used for quotes and corresponding organisational affiliations are not included. The author conducted fieldwork in the summer of 2006, winter 2007 and summer 2008. A total of 205 formal interviews were conducted with the help of local research assistants (150 international workers and 55 Afghan civilians working with international organisations). In addition to these formal interviews, other data collections methods included participant observation within various international spaces such as offices, compounds, bases, restaurants and commercial centres. Travel within Afghanistan took place with an Afghan driver or with Afghan families (rather than internationals) for all research conducted both within and outside Kabul city. The examples provided in this article are based on these interviews, field experiences, travel and informal discussions with Afghan civilians.[1] Much of this research focuses on the ways in which Afghans thought about and provided (or attempted to provide) security for family members and how they ensured the security of foreign visitors. There are a variety of ways in which this was accomplished; the following examples illustrate some of the social, cultural, moral and situational geographies navigated and negotiated as part of physical mobility in this conflict zone. These examples include some but not all forms of civilian and international security.

In the aftermath of the US-led invasion and occupation of Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom), economic and gender-based insecurities associated with the Taliban regime were replaced by the large influx of donor dollars from several international aid/development organisations (both government and non-government). This US-led initiative attempted to construct Afghanistan's physical infrastructure, civil society, economic base, health and education systems. This began in the aftermath of the US invasion with a growing resurgence of political conflict and increasing militarisation of aid/development (Atmar 2001; Barakat and Wardell 2002; Goodhand 2006; Johnson and Leslie 2004; Rubin 2006; Shannon 2009; Suhrke 2007). Critical analysis of international aid/development, NATO, private contractors, private security and logistics personnel in Afghanistan question the validity and ability of these forms of aid and militarism to provide security or stability in the region (Goodhand 2006).

Kandiyoti (2007a) identifies the importance of contextual and situational geographies of security (and aid) in Afghanistan, which require longitudinal commitments (necessary for securing women's lives and trans-border feminisms) that far exceed existing 'western' time frames. Since the fall of the Taliban regime, there are marked increases in asymmetric or unconventional forms of warfare combined with the presence of international troops and the use of conventional weapons (Baker 2007; Graham 2008; IRIN 2009; UNOCHA 2009). Correspondingly these multiple accoutrements of warfare significantly decrease civilians' ability to live outside the spaces of political violence. In summary, the outpouring of international funds to Afghanistan were stymied by a number of competing and uncoordinated political, social and economic agendas, which were further complicated by an increase in violence and subsequent growth of civilian insecurity. Missing from current analyses on security and insecurity in Afghanistan are the hierarchical, multiple and often-divergent ways in which political conflicts are embodied, experienced, reconfigured and resisted by noncombatants (both international workers and Afghan civilians).

Gender and corporeal security/insecurity

For many Afghan civilians, close spatial proximity to certain structures or other bodies (such as combatants or perceived combatants) places one in the line of fire. For example, the use of international military convoys to deliver donations to schools or other public structures in certain areas may also place that site (and the individuals associated with that site) at risk for counter-military, criminal or insurgent violence. Therefore, civilians must often negotiate between the 'need' for US (or other international military personnel) to deliver donated goods, and the potential risk to the individuals receiving these materials. This example illustrates one of the many tensions between international attempts to win the 'hearts and minds' of civilians, and the multiple threats and corresponding negotiations faced by civilians in spaces of unpredictable and intermittent conflict.

Corporeal forms of security include such body coverings as flak jackets, body armour and dress based on different situational and gendered contexts (i.e. the use of western versus Afghan clothing,[2] and

the use of a headscarf or chadori/burqa). Clothing choices such as military attire provide corporeal security to military bodies, while simultaneously communicating threat, distance or distrust to Afghan civilians (see Enloe 1988). For example, Afghan civilians regularly asked, 'what are they afraid of' when commenting on (or in response to) the corporeal and structural security by the international military[3] and some aid/development organisations. Similarly, the male bravado or macho(ism) that accompanies the corporeal representations of international military power (flak jacket, fatigues and body armour) was described by the Afghan civilians in this study as arrogance and fear rather than power or security. Conversely, Afghan forms of male homo-social behaviour (such hand-holding) were perceived by most of the international workers as feminine or homosexual and correspondingly interpreted as weakness, sexual repression and backwardness. In many instances, femininity performs a continual sociopolitical site from which to distinguish and measure masculinity.

A particular form of corporeal security 'dress' (i.e. flak jackets and body armour) within a specific sociopolitical context represents strength and power. Conversely, this type of bodily security in the same geographic space but from a different sociopolitical perspective signals weakness or fear. These corporeal protections communicate much different meanings from diverse contextual, situational and sociopolitical frameworks (particularly to bodies moving in the same geographic spaces without these corporeal accoutrements of militarised security). Similarly, 'other' forms of dress (such as a chadori/burqa or turban) represent security and respectability in public space from a particular perspective, while being viewed by 'other' bodies as a corporeal form of oppression or aggression, respectively. Thus, the concept of 'situated knowledges' (see Haraway 1988) provides an important theoretical tool for analysing divergent forms and methods of civilian security. As argued by feminist geographers, situated knowledges include the corporeal and lived experiences in place and a framework for alternative theoretical concepts of nation and nationalism, territoriality, globalisation and security (Fluri 2009a; Staeheli *et al.* 2004).

Afghan government officials, provincial elders and leaders have also discursively situated US (and other international) military forces as fearful, erratic and emotional (rather than powerful). For example,

Zmarai Bashiri, a spokesman for Afghanistan's Interior Ministry, stated that US troops acted 'emotionally' and with 'fear' when they fired on a crowd of civilians after a suicide bombing (Nunes 2007). Relating emotive response to violent actions and linking them to fear and erratic behaviour serves to disassociate these acts of violence from acceptable 'masculine' behaviours such as honour or courage. An emotional descriptor for the use of violence against civilians by international or insurgent forces also acts as a discursive tool for dismissing the legitimacy of this violence as part of the 'understandable' course of military action.

These socially produced methods for representing and performing masculinity exemplify the vast distances that develop into behavioural borders between disparate and competing forms of masculinity amidst the backdrop of corporeal and structural forms of security. The behavioural norms linked to masculinity and femininity in different Afghan contexts are also performed and negotiated over time through complex customs, expectations and discipline within extensive networks of kinship-based hierarchal and patriarchal relationships that are further intersected by age, family status, education level, religious beliefs, socioeconomic class and location. Thus, it is difficult to generalise gender roles across Afghanistan due to the diversity of experiences and 'situational knowledge' of gender 'norms' and relations. Despite the diversity of gendered roles and experiences, within Afghanistan there remains a general respect for the boundary between public space and home – private family spaces. Non-familial breaches to this boundary are largely identified as a violation of family autonomy and honour.

The violation of private spaces by way of forced entry exemplifies a biopolitical intrusion into autonomous spaces of familial privacy. Historically, various international influences and invasions into Afghanistan's political affairs have attempted to alter the autonomy of family and community through the bodies of women and emasculation of men (see Edwards 2002). Afghans, in contemporary Afghanistan, consistently identify the boundary between public space and the home (private space) as a primary concern when interacting with international military and private security personnel (also see Azarbaijani-Moghaddam *et al.* 2008). Conversely, gender-based aid in Afghanistan – post-9/11/01 – largely focused on women, without a basic understanding of the interrelated gender

complexities across Afghanistan societies (Abirafeh 2009). Additionally, the US-led fetishisation of the burqa/chadori as a symbol of women's oppression – corporeally and 'morally' situated international civilian-military operations as necessary to 'save' and 'liberate' Afghan women.

Chadori (burqa) as mobile security
Recent scholarship that critically analyses both the Taliban's imposition of the chadori on all women in Afghanistan, and the 'expected' removal after the US-led civilian-military occupation, highlight ways in which gendered political discourses flatten the spatial, situational and historical understanding of the chadori (Kandiyoti 2007b; Zulfacar 2006). The politicisation of the chadori attempts to erase contextual complexities, leaving it fraught with multiple and competing uses, signs and signifiers (Fluri 2009b; Hirschkind and Mahmood 2002; Hunt 2002; Jacinto 2006; Rubin 1997). This corporeal marker represents a context and spatially significant 'cover' that also invokes a situational form of security. The chadori visually drapes the body and shields the face (with a fabric-mesh screen), subsequently privatising the body while in public space (i.e. shielding the body from another's line of sight). Conversely, in families and communities where women's use of the chadori is common, family and community members easily recognise chadori-clad women from within their kinship group or community. The chadori is integrated into the social conceptualisation of the gendered body's placement in public space. It is also situated and associated with domestic-private spaces. Therefore, security provided by the chadori identifies the woman's body as civilian-non-combatant[4] and within certain Afghan social contexts the chadori signifies a woman's membership in a kinship group and subsequently 'off limits' to men outside her family. This security relies on a collective, spatial and situational understanding of the chadori's use and meaning.[5]

Male relatives (*mahram*) when escorting chadori-clad women in public space provide another layer of mobile security; these male bodies act as bodily surveillance of and protection for women, who represent the corporeal border of family honour. Wearing the burqa (or not) comes with a complex set of expectations within families and communities, which is further mediated by prevailing social, cultural and political influences on the domestic sphere. Choice over the use of the chadori in public

space is not that of a woman or her kinship group alone. There are several layers of expectation, consideration and sometimes negotiation both within and outside the family. For example, neighbour gossip and the influences of relatives both local and distant may act as mediators over female (and to a lesser extent male) behaviour and corporeality in public and private spaces. Additionally, gendered geopolitics in Afghanistan includes a long history of competing social and political powers, which have conscripted Afghan women's bodies (without their permission) to represent different political and civil ideologies (Edwards 2002; Johnson and Leslie 2004; Kandiyoti 2007b; Rubin 1997 2002; Zulfacar 2006).

Visual symbols, signs and signifiers in public spaces (in addition to the chadori) are essential components for Afghan civilians to ensure their own security (also see Hyndman and De Alwis 2004). Looking inconspicuous or 'in place' (Cresswell 1996; Sibley 1995) remains a significant aspect of civilian security. Corporeal insecurity is closely associated with dislocation from home and more importantly displacement from kinship structures of support. Both forms of insecurity are acutely focused on and experienced at the corporeal scale. Conversely, for women the domestic sphere may also be a site of verbal or physical abuse by family members (also see Warrington 2001). Thus, some women are confronted with compounded forms of physical insecurity (both in and outside the home). In cases of domestic violence, leaving home may be a necessary act to ensure corporeal security and mental stability. For many women this often comes with additional manifestations of human insecurity associated with political conflict such as lack of resources, intense poverty and the lack of infrastructural places to seek shelter[6] (also see Roberts 2008).

Domestic violence and domestic security
Domestic spaces, kinship and friendship networks provide important and at times essential methods of security for Afghan women and men. Domestic spaces are comprised of structural and emotional geographies of security (or feeling secure) and include extensive kinship networks that operate (both in and outside the home) as complex and essential systems for civilian-based security as well as corporeal control and monitoring (particularly for women). Kinship networks beyond home and national boundaries are also increasingly essential

for the economic solvency of families (see Monsutti 2006). Asymmetrical gender relations within the household are marked by complementary and mutually recognised rights and obligations for men and women, which in general are guided by *namus* (honour/face) and materialised by the virtuous conduct of women and the ability of men to control female kin (Kandiyoti 2007a, 512).

In general, women leave their birth home when they marry and enter into the home of their husband and his family. The husband and his family (as her new family – *mahram*) are responsible for her *namus* and protection. This includes various methods of discipline through observational-surveillance, cautious mobility and communal (rather than individual) conceptualisations of human rights and responsibilities (also see Johnson and Leslie 2004). In most cases women's home-place remains 'unfixed' until she is married. As a new member in her husband's home she has little power or authority. Over time through the process of biological and social reproduction, virtue, social networks and her relationship with her husband and sons, she will obtain more power and authority within the sphere of her kin and community (also see Kakar 2002; Kandiyoti 1988; Tapper 1991).

Conflict and displacement have in several cases changed the general structure of some Afghan communities and in some cases disrupted what Kandiyoti (1988) identifies as a form of 'classic patriarchy'. For example, the Afghan women's political organisation, RAWA, implements social reproductive processes to develop an egalitarian understanding of gender relations within families and communities (Fluri 2008). In other cases, conservative views on gender roles and relations have become more entrenched, leading to a significant and violent backlash against women (and men) who seek alternative gender roles and relations (Kandiyoti 2007a).

Home-based comfort and security is further ensured through family interactions within domestic spaces. Family member support remains an integral aspect of everyday life that provides comfort and feelings of security. Political violence outside the home further embeds the family as a central site from which to develop and ensure kin-based networks for emotional connection and security. Incidents of domestic violence increase during times of heightened political conflict or war (Catani *et al.* 2008; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). Conversely, domestic spaces can also be sites of

both abuse and comfort – such as a non-abusive member of the household who provides comfort, support or counsel to the abused person, or may assist with diminishing the amount or intensity of abuse. The extents to which both physical violence and verbal insults are used as a form of discipline/control vary significantly by household. Additionally, women and men gain status and authority in the household over time, by aging and through acts of virtue and protection respectively. Thus, younger women who marry into a household are more likely to experience physical and verbal abuse in the home (by husband, mother-in-law or other in-laws) than older women. The spatial and temporal experiences within homes significantly impact one's experiences and emotional relationship to that site as a space of *either* or *both* security and insecurity.

Domestic security/insecurity is subsequently contingent on the actions and interactions within the home, based on strong relations within this gendered system of labour and discipline as well as biological and social reproduction. Home spaces are important sites of belonging and at times alienation, which are linked to the sense of self and one's connection to and place within kin and community (see Blunt 2003; Blunt and Dowling 2006; Khattak 2002). The home as an essential space of geographic inquiry must also be included into the study of conflict. As Harker (2009) argues, examining the intimate and social reproductive processes of the home helps to dispel well-worn tropes of violence and illustrate the fullness of lives in conflict rather than the continual identification (and often objectification) of life as hollow, barren or bare.

In Afghanistan, the physical boundary between the public sphere and home requires both knowledge of and respect for this border. For example, Azarbaijani-Moghaddam *et al.* argue

> aggressive house-to-house searches and forced entry by international military can easily undermine the Afghaniyat principle of namus (honour), and seem to create more ill-will than civilian casualties. (2008, 6)

Thus, insurgent (or international) forces that understand social/cultural practices such as *pashtunwali*[7] may also manipulate or exploit these practices in order to seek cover in civilian homes. For example, *nanawati*, a tenet of *pashtunwali*, is an obligatory action of protection for anyone who seeks asylum, even if it risks the life of the protector. The practice of

nanawati also places civilians in harm's way, particularly when international forces bomb a village in order to kill Taliban forces, subsequently killing civilians in the practice of *nanawati* rather than as active political supporters of the Taliban (also see Ewans 2005; Rothstein 2006). This example illustrates the significant disconnection that occurs between spatially understanding and militarily occupying places.

The US 'new' counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy and the Human Terrain System (HTS) call attention to the problem of civilian casualties for political stability and military success. HTS and COIN programmes also seek to gain cultural knowledge for military purposes (Gezari 2009; US Army 2006). Within the military, these programmes compete with the vast economies and corporate profits attributed to the use of technological warfare, such as robotics and aerial bomb technologies (also see Singer 2009). In the case of Afghanistan, both forms of US-led military operations invoke biopower. COIN and HTS focus on intimate forms of sociocultural 'understanding' in order to achieve the biopolitical advantage by 'winning hearts and minds'. Thus, by evaluating Afghans as part of the military's 'human terrain', it attempts to link the social configuration of bodies as part of the geographic landscape or theatre of war/conflict. Conversely, aerial bombing and other forms of mass-violence biopolitically reduce bodies to spatial nodes within the targeted topography.

Civilians are often caught between multiple (and equally undesirable) methods of violence, such as US-led international military forces, private military companies, local militias, criminal gangs and the Taliban. These multiple threats to one's physical security remain embedded into everyday life for many Afghan civilians, who both conceptualise and experience security very differently from their international civilian counterparts.

For international workers, domestic sites, gender roles and relations, and the use of violence are often spatially and experientially removed from their understanding of Afghan civilian security. International workers operating as white-collar migratory 'professionals' occupy a privileged state of spatial fluidity by virtue of their 'western' passport, socioeconomic status and ease of international mobility (Fluri 2009c; Neumayer 2006). Conversely, while in Afghanistan their locations and movements are often restricted, based on a set of security parameters and the growing fusion between military and civilian operations.

International security measures

The spatial and emotive distance between Afghan family life, public life and the international locations of aid/development underscore the divergent ways in which security is represented and structurally maintained. Many international aid/development organisations implement specific security requirements for their employees while working in Afghanistan (Fluri 2009c). Other organisations have fewer restrictions and many international workers travel throughout the country with the use of private security personnel.[8] The following section examines the structural techniques used to protect international workers (in larger organisations with strict security requirements). International security structures include enclosed high-walled compounds reinforced by razor wire, armed guards, and in some cases a security line or perimeter around the building with bunker-style sandbags.

The US embassy (in Kabul) exemplifies some of the more meticulous forms of structural security. The entire structure occupies two square blocks and includes an extensive and fortified outside perimeter. There are surveillance cameras in strategic areas and the embassy prohibits the taking of any still and video photography in or of the facility. Anyone seeking entrance to the embassy must have an appointment (or minimally a US passport) to enter the outer border of the embassy's perimeter. An attendant searches bodies and bags before one can proceed, on foot, to the next checkpoint. At this checkpoint individuals must surrender cell phones before entering an enclosed structure for additional security screening. Within this structure, passports are submitted at an intake desk, which is further secured by bulletproof glass with a turnstile window. Before entering the internal structures within the embassy grounds, individuals and their bags are screened with metal detectors similar to airport security. There are also armed guards and military personnel monitoring this process.

International workers (and ex-patriot Afghan returnees from North American, Europe and Australia) primarily populate international compounds. Afghan labourers are employed for domestic chores within compounds (such as cleaning and grounds keeping), while security labour (i.e. body guards) is largely sub-contracted by the use of non-Afghan men from within the region such as the use of male Nepalese security guards

(Nawa 2006). Other security measures include PMCs and logistics companies (which employ both Afghan and non-Afghan labour, depending on the company). PMCs are often identified as 'private security' for aid/development organisations, while PMCs are also hired by regional warlords or to 'secure' criminal activity such as narcotics trafficking (also see Chesterman and Lehnardt 2007; Krahmann 2010; Uesseler 2008).

International workers with strict security requirements are also restricted from spending significant time outside securitised compounds. When leaving a secured compound, international workers must ride in armoured vehicles or be escorted by armed bodyguards (i.e. not allowed to walk alone). International aid/development workers also lamented their inability to connect with or gain trust from Afghan communities because of their security detail or the requirement that they wear flak jackets or other corporeal protections. 'I would like to spend time in Afghan homes, but how is this possible when I have to be brought in by military convoy and sit there sipping tea in full body armor?' (Jane, Development Officer, 2006). International workers' disobedience to their respective organisations' security restrictions will result in job loss. The international workers interviewed for this study continually and consistently identified these restrictions as a significant barrier to their ability to understand and subsequently address the 'real needs' of Afghan civilians in various locations.

International workers that live and work in bounded compounds with armed security guards also experience elevated levels of isolation and psychological stress. To alleviate these by-products of compound life, many sites include creature comforts and technologies that allow for 24/7 electricity and Internet access, and include exercise equipment and other types of physical recreation. International spaces of recreation in Kabul also include restaurants, clubs and malls that cater to the comfort and desires of internationals and capitalise on the disposable incomes of well-paid aid/development workers (Fluri 2009c).

International structural security and armoured-car mobility ensure a spatial boundary and bounded-ness of the protected (international bodies) from outside harm. These security precautions prevent close spatial proximity to private and domestic spaces that are not controlled by internationals. International workers[9] with strict security restrictions cannot access the domestic sphere, which for most Afghan women is the place within which they spend the majority of their time. This in many cases secures the privacy of Afghan women (and men) within the home from engagement with international civilian groups, while it does not protect homes from militarised intrusion, violence and corporeal violation. International aid/development workers' vision and understanding of Afghan civilian and family life remains significantly limited and narrowed by these spatial and structural divisions.

The spatial impact of international organisations includes the economic marginalisation of many Kabuli Afghans from the centre to the periphery of the city. International NGOs and governments with the means to pay rising rental fees for offices and housing structures also engage in economic bidding wars for strategic locations throughout the central city, which results in exorbitant prices that are well beyond the financial reach of most Afghan families. However, due to the employment opportunities and higher salaries offered by international organisations, there is a corresponding spatial attraction to this city for employment (Fluri 2009c). The security precautions implemented for international workers severely impacts the mobility of Afghan civilians (in transit to) and within the capital city. International government and non-government organisations (NGOs) also impact the spatial configuration and 'development' of Kabul (Dittman 2007; Issa and Sardar 2007).

Mobilising security

Afghan citizens who live at the edges of Kabul travel time-consuming distances between home and work, while relying on an inconsistent and overcrowded public transport system, or travel by bicycle, motorbike or shared car (rather than a private car, which is the case for the majority of internationals). The increase of international and Afghan workers within Kabul has resulted in more gridlock traffic, which is further augmented by road barriers, checkpoints and the blocking off of streets around buildings that cater to internationals or other targeted sites (i.e. police stations). Military patrols further slow the movement of people from home to work.

Additionally, military forms of mobile security demand continued movement, which causally affect the path of civilian movement. For example, the Kabul riots (May 2006) were in response to a

traffic accident caused by a military convoy in the process of clearing a path. Military vehicles, in order to provide a 'secure' route, ram their vehicles into stopped traffic to 'clear the road' and sustain continued movement (which subsequently provides the convoy greater security from road-side threats). Military convoys are indeed targets, particularly when stopped in traffic; however, this method of ensuring military security causes injury to cars and passengers that 'impede' the speed and movement of these vehicles. Several civilian drivers (and passengers) have been shot and killed for driving too close to or aggressively near a military (or PMC) convoy.[10]

Travel outside Kabul for international workers with strict security requirements (or wealthy, returning or high-profile Afghans such as government officials) consists of air travel more often than the use of ground transportation between cities. Roads are prime sites of violence (i.e. Unexploded Ordinances (UXOS) and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), and roadside bombs) and are shared by automobiles, bicycles, motorcycles, buses, trucks, military vehicles, humans and animals (i.e. sheep/goat herders, and donkey or horse–pulled carriages) mostly in cities or larger towns. These risk factors, combined with the lack of significant air power by insurgent forces, make air travel relatively safe.

Afghan civilians – ground transportation
The following field notes include examples of ground-transport security as observed while travelling with Afghans and from discussions and interviews. Afghan research participants identified the importance of hiding international corporeality (identified more by type of clothing than skin colour, while white skin colour remains an additional marker of international workers) because it will 'make you a target' when travelling outside Kabul city. Conversely, international corporeality provided the necessary visual marker for entering international-only spaces in Kabul. International corporeality signifies wealth and subsequent vulnerabilities to kidnapping, criminal attack or the extortion of funds. For travel from Kabul to Eastern Afghanistan (to collect observational data and interviews),[11] I relied on existing trust relations with Afghans.[12] Discussion with Afghan men and women from different families was also fraught with debate and disagreement over the best ways to travel safely. Theses discussions focused on gendered corporeal markers, such as facial hair (for

men) and chadori (for women). The following examples are provided in order to illustrate some of the methods used to represent bodies and vehicles as politically innocuous to international military forces, insurgent forces and local militias, and as economically disadvantageous to criminal elements.

Haji jan (who operates an Afghan NGO in an eastern province) asked me to travel with several members of his family. Our travelling party included seven individuals (three adult men – Haji jan and two of his nephews; two women – myself and Asma, Haji jan's wife; and two of their eight children, aged 3 years and 4 months respectively). We packed into a well-worn 1986 Toyota Corolla hatchback (women in Afghan clothes and chadori and men in Afghan clothing – that identified us as rural Afghans from an eastern province). Haji jan (the eldest male in this group) continually called his family, friends and associates during the trip to gauge the situation and security level at different locations on our journey in order to identify safe travel routes.

Travelling with a group of family members mobilises the security of domestic spaces for these Afghan civilians.[13] Men are charged with the protection of women and children (in this kinship group) and to ensure safe passage from one point to another. Similarly, male bodies in the company of women and children are generally perceived as less threatening. Women and children's bodies in these cases provide a corporeal layer of security due to their noncombatant status and the expectation that Afghan men (acting as *mahram*) will provide women and children with safe passage, and therefore not be likely to engage in acts of violence.

For Afghan civilians, international vehicles were seen to pose a significant security risk because they were targets for insurgent violence. For example, Nadir, a seasoned driver in Kabul (for internationals and Afghans), identified the importance of using a 'local' (i.e. older model) rather than 'international' (newer model) vehicle in order to appear 'in place' and with few resources and to avoid becoming a target for kidnapping or robbery. Within the context of Kabul, international bodies have become ubiquitous and therefore seen as an expected part of the urban landscape. International bodies in provincial locations are less common, may be perceived as a threat (or opportunity) and therefore at higher risk for crime or political violence. Conversely, international bodies with

strong Afghan community connections are often 'protected' under the sphere of kin and community, and therefore afforded both greater access to community life, domestic spaces and local community security.

In order to travel to northern Afghanistan (in July 2008) Haji jan suggested that I wear a chadori, while Nadir (with whom I had worked in Afghanistan since 2006 and who would accompany me on this trip) dismissed this as a solution because 'then people will think I am alone with an Afghan girl, and I am married and it would create problems for me'. In Kabul, driving with an international female body was of less concern for him than an Afghan female body (as signalled by the chadori). As a seasoned driver working with internationals and providing a taxi-car service for Afghans, Nadir was well known in the city and it would not seem 'out of place' for him to drive an international woman. However, driving an 'Afghan woman' (in chadori) would, in his estimation, be perceived as breeching the very boundary that a chadori-clad body should represent. The chadori signalled a different 'meaning' based on Nadir's (urban) and Haji jan's (rural) interpretations of its ability to 'cover' the corporeality of my[14] internationality while simultaneously identifying 'local' in a manner that was both in place and potentially perceived as counter to the acceptable gender parameters for public mobility in this city. The chadori is *not* in and of itself a protective cover. The chadori-clad body must be situated 'in place' in order for it to provide the acceptable and appropriate 'cover'. Women (despite western media myths) are not invisible under the chadori; rather they are visible by way of their mobility and relation placement within their kinship group and community. These examples exemplify much broader and active methods in which civilians continually negotiate and actively work towards ensuring safe passage and security within a conflict zone that includes both predictable and unpredictable violence.

Summary and conclusions

The fusion of civilian–military operations exemplifies contemporary forms of aid/development – which attempt to reduce living bodies to bare life – as either expendable bodies or 'in need' of aid/development. Conversely, and rarely discussed, are the active methods and disparate forms of civilian agency that resist attempts to reduce or eliminate life through complicated and continually changing survival tactics. The examples of civilian security measures provided in this article do not represent an exhaustive list, nor are they intended to limit our spatial understanding of security to one place.

While macro-scale analyses of security and civilian agency across various locations provide important data, it remains imperative that geographers and other social scientists examine the particularities of specific conflict sites and situations in order to avoid one-size-fits-all responses to political conflict – and subsequently flattening civilian experiences through aggregated forms of knowledge production. Therefore, this paper has sought to address several key aspects of feminist political geography by including the multiple and varied experiences of the everyday in the midst of geopolitical conflict, aid and development. Thus, this contextual and place-specific analysis suggests the need for additional study of conflict zones to broaden epistemologies of civilian securities/insecurities, agency and methods for reacting to, resisting and managing their lives in various and complicated states of uncertainty, instability and threat. Civilian security measures cannot and should not be reduced to Orientalist framings of culture or limited to quantitative analyses of insurgent forces, criminal networks, international militaries or PMCs.

Civilian bodies increasingly populate the spaces of conventional and unconventional warfare, (Ewans 2005; Rothstein 2006). This draws significant and important attention to the need for additional research on the corporeality of battlegrounds from within the theatres of war as well as the corporeal markers and their displacements and meanings in different spatial contexts. The body is often the battleground onto which violence is orchestrated, and rights and victimisation-based discourses are expounded to shape public opinion, policy and political action. 'Below the radar' (see DeCerteau 1984) methods of securitising the body in the midst of conflict and avoiding spatial proximity to violent targets includes various manifestations of appearance and strategies for mobility in public space. Aerial, roadside and suicide bombing rely on the element of surprise and despite individual or technological precision, civilian casualties are the inextricable result of aerial and ground-level bombing. Thus, civilian security tactics cannot prevent violence or provide fool-proof security from violence; rather they offer coping mechanisms for civilian bodies cum battleground.

This article underscores the importance and need for additional research on home and domestic spaces within conflict zones. Domestic spaces are complex and complicated sites of both security and insecurity for men and women. Domestic security and violence remain contingent on the structures of home, respect for the boundary between home and public space, and most importantly kinship relationships and networks both within and outside these physical structures. Domestic family life includes complicated sites and gendered spaces that in some cases compound women's experiences of violence from both within and outside the home, and in other cases are spaces of both domestic abuse and comfort. Domestic spaces and extensive Afghan kinship networks supply an essential place for an emotive sense of security. Domestic spaces are indeed gendered, but we must not flatten these places as an either/or site of security/insecurity, or violence/passivity. A domestic space is a complicated site of security from political or criminal violence outside the home, while it may also be a site of family-based violence, and in several cases a site of comfort from both public and private violence.

Both Afghan civilians and international civilian workers conceptualise home or compounds as private spaces and sites of security. Breaches of the boundary to these private spaces by unwanted or uninvited guests or 'others' (in general) signals violation and actual or potential acts of violence. However, there remains a decided lack of understanding and respect for this boundary from international forces and inequitable value placed on the lives of individuals inside international compounds and Afghan homes respectively.

Male and female Afghan bodies also occupy multiple placements across different social-cultural contexts, while US-led international geopolitical perceptions of Afghans remains locked in gendered dualities – men as enemies or allies, and women as either oppressed locally or liberated by international aid/development. 'Cultural understanding' as recently identified by the US military to win 'hearts and minds' seeks both lethal and non-lethal methods for national stability and integrates aid/development and establishing a 'free market economy' as essential aspects of the COIN strategy (see US Army 2006). These programmes draw upon classic methods for colonisation and imperial military occupation. These strategic methods for 'improving' military strategy in Afghanistan also compete and occur in tandem with (rather than in lieu of) conventional and technological military operations such as aerial bombs, drones and robotics – which also kill civilians.

As part of the on-the-ground networks that categorise contemporary warfare in Afghanistan, there are significant differences and spatial distances between international aid/development workers (as part of militarised hearts and minds campaigns) and the Afghan civilians they intend to assist, serve or recruit. These spatial distances include divergent corporeality – such as between military personnel equipped with body armour and weapons and their attempts to engage with unarmed civilians. The layers of structural and corporeal security that surround the boundaries of international work and workers include restricted access to Afghan civilian spaces. The sites and situations as well as the corporeal methods used by civilians for their own security remain in a state of continual change and negotiation, and are contingent on one's ability to read and adjust to the multiple threats directly related to behaviour, dress, corporeality, gender and mobility.

It is necessary to examine and untangle the various practices of security by Afghan civilians, which are at times driven by survival rather than political ideology. For example, civilian support of the Taliban (or other insurgent forces) may in some cases be linked to cultural values and belief systems, such as *pashtunwali*, and in other cases occur as a tactic of human survival. Therefore, it would not be out of the question for an individual or group to provide support for or information to both US-led international forces and the Taliban. There are no guarantees or methods for civilians to clearly or accurately identify which group will retain the military or paramilitary authority in a given place. Civilian survival tactics may therefore include 'cooperating' with a number of armed groups or individuals (i.e. Taliban, narcotics traffickers or international forces) which does not by definition translate into an ideological commitment to one or any group.

Providing 'security' in places such as Afghanistan should take into consideration alternative methods for examining ground-level procedures that appear in one ideological context as 'supporting terrorists' and in another as everyday methods for corporeal survival within an international conflict zone. Consequently, certain corporeal and structural representations of security in one location and situational context are conversely read or

experienced as insecurity by civilian bodies despite US geopolitical goals to secure local support through neo-military strategies such as COIN and HTS. Winning hearts and minds is much more complicated and subtle. Hearts, minds and bodies, when identified and treated as equally valuable, valued and worth counting in both a quantitative and qualitative understanding of place remains both an essential and overlooked aspect of international entanglements within Afghanistan and other conflict zones.

This research and analysis also questions both state and private forms of military security and its neo-colonial apparatus for networking the various aspects of human security that are further entangled with the global corporate and economic systems that ensure prolonged conflict and resource extraction. Despite these macro-processes, civilians in conflict zones (such as Afghanistan) remain important actors by way of their varied methods for securing life and livelihood, and their ability to continually resist and refashion the violent attempts to displace, re-dress or erase their lives.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 Informal discussions about security took place with approximately 250 individuals over the course of the three field visits.
2 Wearing western clothes, particularly for Afghan men, was identified as a quick or efficient method to move in and out of international spaces. These men also discussed their frustration with and resentment toward these corporeal expectations.
3 This includes US, NATO and ISAF (International Security Assistance Forces).
4 However, this is not always the case, as women in chadori/burqas during the Soviet occupation were used to smuggle weapons.

5 In Afghan communities where the chadori is not common, there remains a general understanding of its use and meaning.
6 There are a limited number of protected shelters for women in Afghanistan, and prisons often act as shelters for women fleeing marriages or abuse in the domestic sphere; however, access to and knowledge of shelters remains limited.
7 This is a conventional code of behaviour for Pashtuns, the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan.
8 Conversely, there are international workers who do not employ private security companies and rely on trust-based relationships established within Afghan communities.
9 In general, international men would not be able to access domestic spaces (except by invitation from an Afghan male head of household) due to gender-based divisions of space to ensure that men outside the kinship network do not have access to women. There are of course exceptions to these rules, such as those based on mutual understanding and trust between parties, or international men accompanied by a female spouse or relative.
10 In response, training sessions are provided for Afghan drivers in order to teach them how to avoid military vehicles and convoys while in traffic.
11 This included research on two small-scale non-profit non-government organisations, a national Afghan-run NGO and a US–Afghan cooperative.
12 Trust is gained over time, based on face-to-face discussion and spending significant time with family members and sharing domestic spaces.
13 Afghan men travelling alone are often perceived as dangerous and threatening (as potential suicide bombers).
14 This was not simply to cover my skin color (i.e. white) as many Afghans are light skinned. It was also based on a number of other ways in which someone was identified as an 'outsider', for example, the manner in which a headscarf or chadori was worn, the way in which one walked, the types of shoes worn, the type of accent when speaking.

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