

## Impact of the Iraq Security State on the Latino Community

JOSÉ RAMÓN SÁNCHEZ

### ABSTRACT

Americans seem to fear Latinos (both immigrants and residents) almost as much as they fear terrorists. Latinos, in fact, are also subjected, like terrorists, to an increasingly militarized government treatment as well as to sophisticated electronic surveillance, deadly attacks, and unlawful detainment practices. The reasons for this similarity are not accidental and, in fact, the two are deeply connected. First, the employment of a more militarized approach to handling Southern U.S. border security as well as to Latino community policing is, in part, a direct result of the economic opportunism of military contractors who see these areas as a profitable replacement for the end of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Second, and more importantly, Latino migration represents a level of threat to the sovereignty of the U.S. state that is in many ways similar to that posed by the transnational network of terrorists. As a consequence, the U.S. state has responded to this perceived threat with pre-emptive and aggressive practices that have often violated constitutional principles and placed the Latino community at great risk.

Keywords: Latino, migration, terrorism, borders, state security, sovereignty, defense contractors, pre-emption, *barrio*.

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RESUMEN

Los estadounidenses parecen temer a los latinos (tanto inmigrantes como residentes) casi tanto como temen a los terroristas. De hecho, los latinos también están sometidos, al igual que los terroristas, a un trato cada vez más militarizado por parte del gobierno, así como a una sofisticada vigilancia electrónica, ataques mortales y prácticas de detención ilegales. Las razones de esta similitud no son accidentales y, de hecho, están profundamente conectadas. En primer lugar, la utilización de un enfoque más militarizado a la hora de regular la seguridad fronteriza en el sur de EE.UU., así como la vigilancia policial de la comunidad latina es, en parte, una consecuencia directa del oportunismo económico de los contratistas de defensa que ven estas áreas como una manera de reemplazar rentablemente el final de las operaciones militares en Irak y Afganistán. En segundo lugar, y más importante, la inmigración latina representa un nivel de amenaza a la soberanía de los EE.UU. que es en muchos aspectos similar a la planteada por la red internacional de terroristas. Como consecuencia, EE.UU. ha respondido a esta amenaza con prácticas preventivas y agresivas que a menudo violan los principios constitucionales y suponen un gran riesgo para la comunidad latina.

Palabras clave: Latino, migración, terrorismo, fronteras, seguridad del Estado, soberanía, contratistas de defensa, guerra preventiva, barrio.

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The Bush regime's war on Iraq devastated not only the people of Iraq but also those of the United States. The people of the U.S. inherited many policies that serve to erode freedom, and may even violate the constitution. The National Security Agency's Prism program, which collected and analyzed the email and other data from nine leading Internet companies, is just one example of this breach in citizen privacy and rights (Gellman & Poitras). The Iraq war has, however, also produced increasingly invasive, repressive, and unconstitutional policies towards Latinos and other minorities in the U.S. The media, and the Latino community itself, have largely overlooked this emerging and dangerous assault on Latinos.

The reasons why Latinos have been so targeted are complex but can be explained in terms of certain social, economic, and political trends. In general, the conditions of life and movement of Latinos within and into the U.S. suggests to many Americans that U.S. state power has declined. Thus, the repeated calls to "strengthen the borders" have the underlying message that failure to do so will create chaos and lawlessness.

As a consequence, this perception helps to perpetuate the entrenched power of the military and the security apparatus of war set up during the Iraq War under the Bush Administration.

In general, it is because Latinos pose an unusual problem to U.S. state sovereignty that they have increasingly been treated in ways that resemble the putative “War on Terrorism.” An outline of the forces at work producing this serious military assault on the welfare and freedom of Latinos in the U.S. include these:

1. There are significant real and assumed parallels between the apparent threats to the power of the U.S. uni-polar state posed by Muslim insurgents and terrorists around the world and by the migration of mostly Latino labor across U.S. borders.
2. As a result of these similarities, the strategies and technologies developed to confront terrorism around the world are now being employed against home grown terrorists and migrant labor at home.
3. Pre-emption, the main ideological justification for the invasion of Iraq, has also become the dominant approach used by police forces against migrant Latino labor as well as on Latino and African American communities.
4. And finally, security and technology corporations have focused their efforts on encouraging local and federal authorities to purchase and utilize their surveillance and detention systems.

These combination of factors create an increasingly repressive security state for everyone, but especially for Latino and other minorities in the U.S.

## 1. A SUPERPOWER’S IRONIC VULNERABILITY

Many people recognize the tremendous impact of the Iraq and Afghan wars on U.S. domestic political policy. The fiscal, political, and constitutional impact are deep and a continuing source of extreme challenge for state leaders and citizens. The challenge, however, is deeper than most people realize. These wars placed a tremendous toll on the blood and treasure of the U.S. Those costs will continue to be paid for years to come. Some would claim that such costs are necessary given the horrific nature of the 9/11 attack. But those wars may also represent something other than simple revenge or restitution for a terrorist attack.

The Iraq War, in particular, was, in many ways, the realization of a plan hatched by a group of conservative political leaders called the Neo-Cons (Ball). They lobbied for an invasion of Iraq and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein since the mid-1990s. They hoped to reshape the politics of the Middle East by doing so. It was a policy that tried

to capitalize on the idea that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the U.S. became the only world Superpower, unchallenged by any other. The Neo-Cons argued that they had a unique historical window to reshape the world, since there was no other state with comparable power to oppose it (Ehrenberg et al. 19). What they did not count on was that these wars would actually energize and solidify a terrorist opposition.

The so-called “War on Terror” exposes the possible limits to the power of the unipolar state. The Bush Administration seemed to recognize this early on. Not soon after invading Afghanistan in search of Bin Laden and al Qaeda, the Bush regime shifted its focus to overthrowing Saddam Hussein in Iraq, because, they claimed, he possessed weapons of mass destruction and had or was going to arm terrorists. Yet, if one looks carefully at the speeches and texts that spewed from the Bush Administration then, we can see evidence of a more general exasperation at fighting a vague and ghostly terrorist foe.

At the June 1, 2002 graduation speech at West Point, President Bush made it clear how hamstrung U.S. military power was against terrorists. He said, “Deterrence—the promise of massive retaliation against nations— means nothing against shadowy terrorist networks with no nation or citizens to defend” (Ehrenberg et al. 65). The very nature of terrorist organizations, thus, open troubling and deep fissures in the power of the U.S. State and for all advanced capitalist states in this contemporary period.

That exasperation let the Bush regime to launch the Afghan and Iraq wars as a putative response to the terrorist attack of 9/11. Those wars were, however, the front piece for an unquenchable War on Terror that exposed the deep fissures and revealed deep weaknesses in the effective powers of the modern state. Many analysts began to point to the idea, even before 9/11, that the modern state faced increasing threats to its power as a result of globalization (Dunn; Held; Mann; Ohmae). Thus, many questioned, during the 1990s, “whether the nation state has a future as a major locus of governance in an increasingly ‘globalized’ economic and social system” (Hirst & Thompson).

Predictions by analysts in the 1990s that the state was dead were actually premature. But the evidence does suggest that the capitalist democratic state today faces serious challenges to its sovereign power. One reason is that the state itself advances “Multinational free trade agreements, supranational financial institutions, and transnational corporations ensure that capital can float between nations with all the ease of a monarch butterfly” (Meyerson). Globalization, thus, effectively means several things. First, the state can no longer secure a monopoly of force within its territories because economic enterprises don’t respect them. Second, it also means that the state is largely incapable of extracting revenue from these capitalist butterflies.

The Iraq and Afghanistan wars suggest a few additional specific and important factors that contribute to weakening the power of the state, and to the U.S. Superpower status in particular. Even as their own capitalist firms flaunt their ability to skirt the power of the state to tax and control their movements, the emergence of a terrorist resistance in Iraq and Afghanistan exposed the inability of the state to defeat what, on paper, looked like weak and poorly trained terrorist and insurgent opponents. It is perhaps because of this weakness that the U.S. state appears to increasingly overreach and engage in activities that are counterproductive, destructive, and, ultimately, incapable of protecting its powers as a state?

The idea of contradictions in capitalist state power is not new. Marxists and non-Marxists alike have often called attention to the strong tendency towards crisis in advanced capitalist societies as a result of its inherent contradictions. Most of these arguments focus on economic or political crisis. But I think advanced capitalist states are also subject to a contradiction and crisis over security. This crisis is not exactly about legitimacy, but related. It is about the inability of the modern democratic capitalist state to secure its power to monopolize coercion and control its territory while maintaining democratic processes. It is a crisis about the spatial limits of the post-industrial democratic state's coercive capabilities, strategies, and tactics.

All states face limits to the use of force. At one end, the limit is determined by the deterioration of legitimacy and authority. At the other end, the limit is expressed by the total decimation of the civilian population. Both limits seriously threaten state power. If it starts to kill off most of its citizens, a state would end up devouring its own source of power and authority. On the other hand, a state without legitimacy lacks the political and moral authority to monopolize coercion. The limits to state power in the current period have changed somewhat. The state appears threatened not only by citizens from within (as in Turkey or China) nor simply also by other states from without.

The major threat to state coercive power comes from decentralized and non-state forces. Globalization, multi-national corporations, criminal syndicates, terrorism, and the contemporary uni-polar state system have created increasing threats to the stability and power of the advanced capitalist nation state. These pervasive, and hard to resist, external and internal forces undermine state boundaries and threaten its monopoly of coercive power.

The state becomes unable to clearly define the boundaries of its sovereignty. It becomes the antithesis of a state. It becomes "leaky". Capital, profits, and people enter and leave very easily. Tax revenues fall. The leaky state becomes, as a result, less concerned with legitimizing its rule. It becomes more reckless and expansive in its use of

surveillance and coercive attacks on its own citizens. While the leaky state attempts to contain these contradictions with ideological efforts, those attempts to secure legitimacy are upended by the diffused and decentralized nature of the threats it faces.

In a speech clearly designed to buff its image as a super and moral power to the world and to its own citizens, President Obama laid out a new counter-terrorism policy at the National Defense University on May 23, 2013. He explained the limits and contradictions of that policy when he stated

And yet, as our fight enters a new phase, America's legitimate claim of self-defense cannot be the end of the discussion. To say a military tactic is legal, or even effective, is not to say it is wise or moral in every instance (Obama 2013).

Thus, President Obama admitted that the devastating power of the U.S. is often not enough or too much to use, especially if the U.S. wants to claim moral superiority. But less discussed by the media was an admission by Obama of the contradictory forces of economic and technical development at work producing terrorism and limiting the state's responses to it.

As I said earlier, this threat is not new. But technology and the Internet increase its frequency and in some cases its lethality. Today, a person can consume hateful propaganda, commit him or herself to a violent agenda, and learn how to kill without leaving their home (Ídem).

This means the forces threatening state power not only cannot be easily contained, but they are perpetuated and enhanced by the core industries of the post-industrial capitalist economy. Similar challenges exist within the U.S., he said.

Thwarting homegrown plots presents particular challenges in part because of our proud commitment to civil liberties for all who call America home. That's why, in the years to come, we will have to keep working hard to strike the appropriate balance between our need for security and preserving those freedoms that make us who we are (Ídem).

Thus, President Obama laid out a counterterrorism policy that amounts to trying to end terrorism with one arm as the other helps to produce it. The state works to advance the development of a technology and post-industrial economy that also advances the impact of terrorism. And the state must also be careful not to annoy or offend citizens, who want both technology and counter terrorism, by engaging in intelligence gathering that trample their constitutional rights.

It's true that the public generally supports increased surveillance and judicial prosecution against those who expose state secrets and violations of constitutional rights. But the vagueness and amorphous nature of the terrorist threat often also defuses that support. As a result, the public's outright rejection of the state's efforts occurs more frequently now. Recently, both liberal and conservative members of a Congress that normally cannot agree on anything have attempted to reign in the secret data gathering (Udall & Wyden). Whatever the ultimate outcome of this attempted legislation, the state faces a delicate and, ultimately, probably fruitless effort to gather the information it desires to counter terrorism without violating constitutional rights.

Capitalist state power is clearly at a crossroads. This may be a historic moment for the state. Major changes in the inchoate power of the state last occurred with the emergence of the capitalist economic system. The sovereign state system, that we still have today, proved more efficient at waging war and accumulating capital than the older city-states, monarchical states, and empires they replaced. The centralized and territorial features of the modern nation state began to solidify during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. That model appears to be challenged today by processes the state helped to set in motion.

I won't get into a more detailed analysis here of the contemporary historical processes at work now to produce this crisis in state power. I will, instead, focus on how the United States, as the world's remaining superpower, has responded to this emerging crisis of the state. More specifically, I will explain how the U.S.'s particular response in the Iraq War created a coping mechanism loaded with contradictory and destructive impulses. In addition, that machinery is now being put to use on the Latino community in the U.S.

The U.S. State was shaken by the brazenness and effectiveness of the 9/11 terrorist attack. Later, its response, in the Iraq and Afghan wars, served mainly to expose the deep ironic vulnerability of the U.S., even though it is the world's only superpower (Mack). Terrorist enemies can skirt around the superpower's vast and deep capabilities and often flummox its efforts to dominate. Terrorists have always operated in an uneven, asymmetrical, and unorthodox terrain. They wear no uniforms, have no standing armies or clear command structures, and can be found anywhere. They are also now globally dispersed, self-trained online, as well as easily armed with common materials and conventional weapons. The reasons are clear.

First, terrorists can also make themselves formidable opponents by simply making use of the technologies developed by the Superpower (Weiner). They easily arm themselves with modern technologies like computers and cell phones in order to

coordinate and send destruction almost anywhere. They can partially train themselves to fly passenger jet airliners by utilizing computer simulation software. All of this blunts the effectiveness of the U.S.'s mighty armed forces as well as limits the usefulness of its expensive and deadly weapons (Steel).

Modern terrorists, thus, expose the lone Superpower's Achilles' heel. So much of U.S. power springs from its economic and technological advantages. But those advantages eventually diffuse around the world and enable people in far-flung locations to access and utilize them to their benefit. Terrorists, thus, simply turn the technological and economic prowess of the U.S. against it. Confused and weakened by these processes, many determined U.S. political leaders resort to unlawful and, largely, unproductive strategies in an attempt to diminish the terrorist advantage (Spiegel).

The second major factor is that the "war on terror" is not really a war and cannot be settled by the threat or use of overwhelming force. Terrorist movements can last forever and can impose great costs in blood and treasure to the superpower. They spring, for the most part, from the weakness of a population that views itself colonized and suppressed. For these reasons, the U.S. has turned increasingly to technological methods of combating terrorism. Since, these methods are supposedly cheaper and don't endanger American troops, they can, theoretically, also be used forever.<sup>1</sup> These technological strategies, however, also fuel terrorism. Drone strikes, for example, too often kill innocent people and terrorist forces utilize that fact for very effective propaganda purposes.

The third and most important contribution from the Iraq and Afghan wars is the policy of pre-emption. The U.S. launched its war against Iraq because it claimed that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. But the Bush Administration actually lied and manipulated the United Nations, the U.S. Congress, and the American people into believing this charge was true. It did so primarily because the Bush Administration was flooded with a group of war minded ideologues, the so-called Neo-Cons (Paul Wolfowitz, Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney and others).<sup>2</sup> This bunch had pushed a plan since the early 1990s to topple Saddam as part of a grand strategy to reshape the politics of the Middle East (Marshall). The philosophical and political principle behind this strategy was called "preemption."

I believe that all three of these products of the Iraq and Afghan wars are now seeping into the strategies used to contain minority communities within U.S. cities and to "close the borders" to Latino migrants. The strategies for fighting and containing terrorist threats now being used inside the U.S. have incurred opposition from both the right and the left. Most of these concerns have been over issues of privacy and the threats to freedom posed by these strategies (ACLU). But there are other, equally important, reasons to be concerned. The strategies and technologies learned and used in

the Iraq and Afghan wars not only threaten freedom, but also threaten the health and life of Latinos, minorities in general, as well as others in the U.S.

## 2. THE PARALLELS BETWEEN THE TERRORIST THREAT AND THE LATINO COMMUNITY

U.S. political leaders should have learned what Al Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden learned from the Soviet war in Afghanistan during the 1980s. Most superpowers have a very difficult time stopping and containing *guerilla* and terrorist movements, especially on their home turf and in rugged terrain. The Soviets learned it the hard way by suffering a terrible defeat at the hands of tribal and rebel opposition in their disastrous nine-year war in Afghanistan. The U.S. should have learned it too since it helped to defeat the Soviets by arming the rebels, including Osama Bin Laden. The Bush Administration neo-con objectives compounded the ultimate failure.

As Osama explained, al Qaeda plans were to use the 9/11 attack to “provoke” the Bush “administration and to drag it [to us]” to fight a “war of attrition” and “to make America bleed profusely” (Ehrenberg 499). Thus, the evidence suggests very strongly that the attack of 9/11 was launched as part of Al Qaeda’s plan to lure the U.S. to fight a major war in the Middle East against terrorists. They believed that such a war would give al Qaeda an advantage, weaken the U.S., and eventually cause the U.S. to collapse because the war would be too costly, in blood and treasure, to the U.S. They were not far wrong.

States have always been better able to handle disputes with other states. Revolutions and guerilla insurgents have generally proven difficult for states to defeat. Al Qaeda demonstrated how easy it is for a small, relatively weak group to penetrate, hurt, and provoke the only Superpower state. As one commentator explained, Al Qaeda exposed “the increasing impotence and fragmentation of nation-states in the face of threats from subnational non-state actors” (Gilman & Costigan).

Even the recent disclosures of the global reach of U.S. intelligence gathering efforts demonstrate both the incredible capabilities of the U.S. state as well as its weakness. Enormous amounts of money have been invested on a variety of cyber security and intelligence. The idea is to gather everything on a global scale and hope to find some hidden patterns that can reveal a looming plot or threat. The very effort to employ cyber intelligence methods rises confounding practical, political, and ethical problems.

The defused and decentralized nature of the terrorist threat made the U.S. create a vast data gathering effort and to classify almost all of what it analyzes as top secret. They are looking for a needle that changes form, not just in the proverbial haystack, but also actually in every nook and cranny of the world. While the U.S. has had some success

utilizing this broad intelligence mechanism, it is also evidence of how the defused terrorist threat has produced a lack of analytical focus and an unclear strategic defense policy for the U.S. The result is that, as a 2008 report from the director of national intelligence made clear, “The definitions of ‘national security’ and what constitutes ‘intelligence’ — and thus what must be classified—are unclear.”

The vast data gathering machinery and vague national security classifications also means producing too many opportunities for members of that machinery to disagree about the classification and leak it to the public in the interest of democratic transparency. Thus, as Tom Engelhardt so persuasively argues, such global structures come with global scale probabilities that the information and the processes will themselves be leaked. He says,

So in our age, considering the gigantism of the U.S. surveillance and intelligence apparatus and the secrets it holds, it’s a given that the leak, too, will become more gigantic, that leaked documents will multiply in droves, and that resistance to regimes of secrecy and the invasion of private life that goes with them will also become more global.” (Engelhardt).

This problem has become more and more evident as the state expands data gathering, hires more computer and Internet specialists with limited loyalties to the state, and invades the privacy and constitutional rights of its citizens. Recent examples of such leaking of government intelligence programs include Bradley Manning, Edward J. Snowden, and the WikiLeaks enterprise (Liptak).

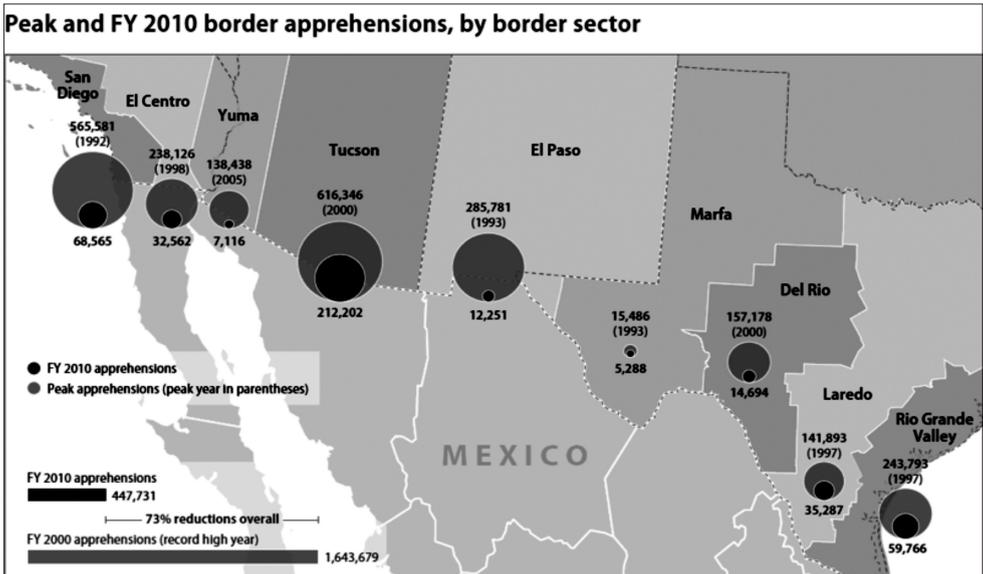
The effort to centralize information, secrecy, legitimacy, and coercion that have proven so strong and effective for the modern state for a long time simply have real limits today, especially for a democratic state in a global world. The mechanisms that proved so useful to the modern state in the past (indoctrination, socialization, symbolism, patriotism, peer pressure, legitimacy and law, coercion, as well as authority) no longer work as effectively when the targets are scattered around the world and minimally subject to the laws and political culture of other states.

As a result, state officials are not just bewildered and threatened, but searching for solutions that can successfully target the enemy without violating too many of the freedoms we claim to stand for. The fear is that the scattered and largely leaderless enemy will find a way to deliver destruction and embarrass if not de-stabilize the state. As Diane Feinstein, the head of the Senate Intelligence committee said,

“What do you think would happen if Najibullah Zazi was successful?” she asked, referring to the man who pleaded guilty to plotting to bomb the New York City subway. Intelligence officials have said N.S.A. e-mail surveillance helped them catch Mr. Zazi. “There would be unbridled criticism,” she said. “Didn’t we learn



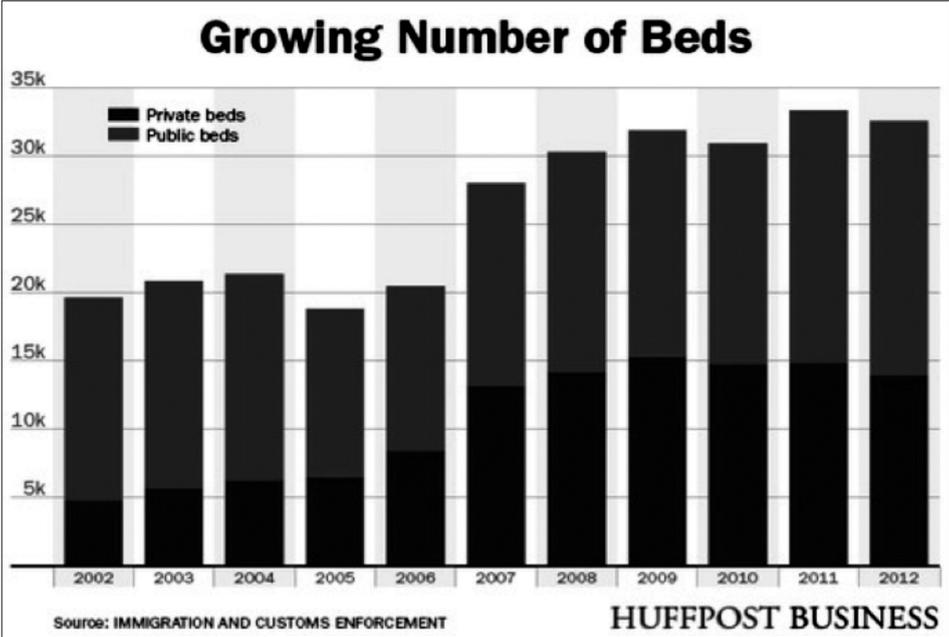
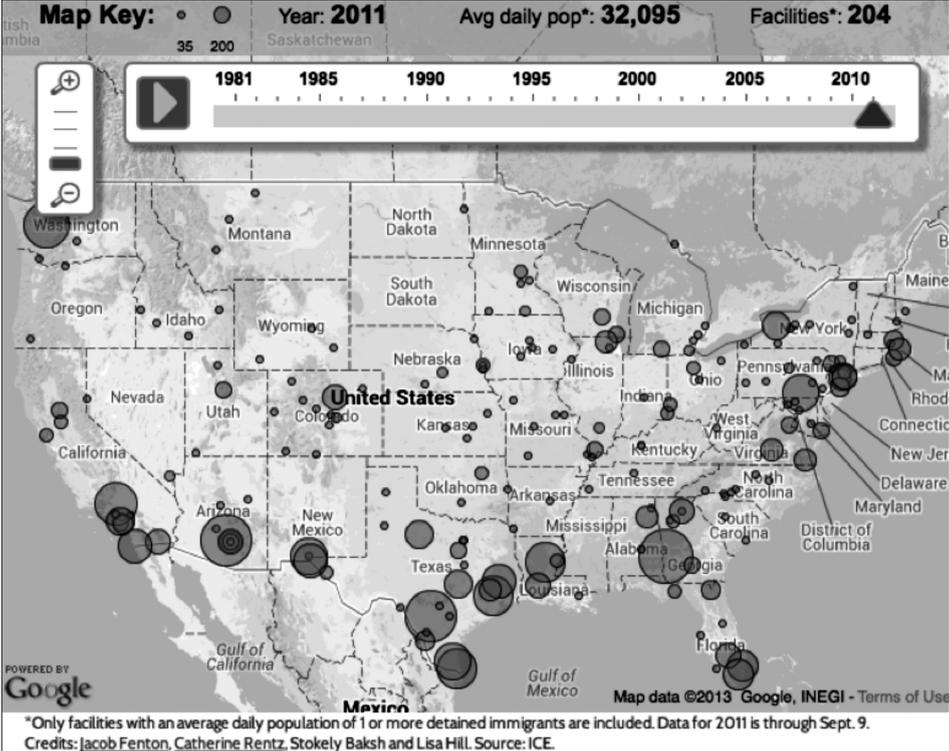
These efforts to close the borders, however, have produced no real lasting results. Only the 2008 economic recession in the U.S. put any dent in the flow of people across the border. Increased enforcement at heavy crossing sites simply moves the traffic to other areas, as the map below shows.



Source: Center for American Progress, Safer Than Ever. August 2011.

That migration has proven as impossible to contain as the terrorist uprising in Iraq and Afghanistan (Bacon). And the solutions have, as a result, become very similar. They include militarizing the border with troops or police, new surveillance technologies, electrified fences, and physical barriers along the Mexican border. They have not contained the migration but they have caused death and hardship to many migrants. But, perhaps, the biggest similarity is in the use of detention facilities to remove migrants from society while the government decides what to do with them (NIJC).

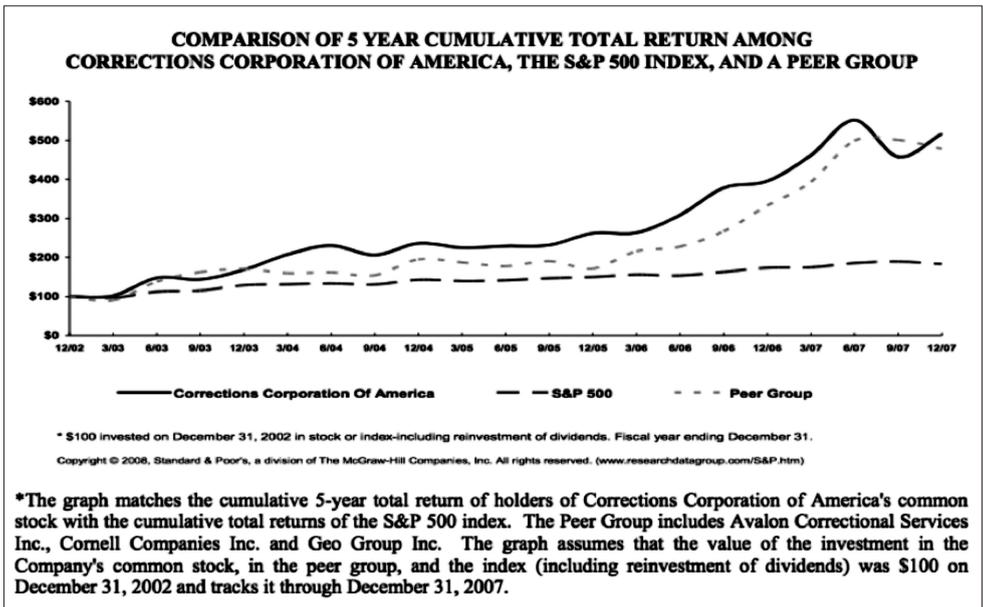
Like the thousands of “unlawful enemy combatants” held hostage in U.S. bases like Guantanamo, these “illegal aliens” are mostly Latino, not criminals, and held hostage in numerous federal detention facilities all around the country without judicial processing, often for years, as the map below shows (Preston 2011). Recent reports indicate that these migrants have also been subject to torture. Large numbers of migrants have often been placed in solitary confinement for weeks and months at a time (Urbina). As a result, between 2003 and 2012, 110 migrants died while held in U.S. detention centers (Danticat).



In Iraq, the U.S. government resorted to private corporate security forces, not subject to legal and government oversight, to provide security, services, as well as to protect high value locations and individuals. One of the biggest beneficiaries of these government contracts was Dick Cheney’s Halliburton and subsidiary corporations (Young). These companies fed at the federal government trough with inflated contracts, performed poorly, and were found to be largely rotting from corruption on the inside (Capaccio).

<b>Corporate Involvement in Immigration Detention</b>				
<b>Corporation</b>	<b>Number of Beds - Average Daily Population</b>			<b>Lobbying Expenditures</b>
	<b>FY 2007</b>	<b>FY 2008</b>	<b>FY 2009</b>	<b>1999-2010</b>
Alaska Native Corporations	21	121	245	\$0
CCA	5,630	6,043	6,199	\$20,892,000
Civigenics	194	602	864	\$0
Cornell	0	0	0	\$360,000
Emerald	919	906	846	< \$5,000
GEO	3,488	4,039	4,948	\$2,390,000
LCS	307	814	596	\$40,000
MTC	1,474	1,634	2,244	\$0

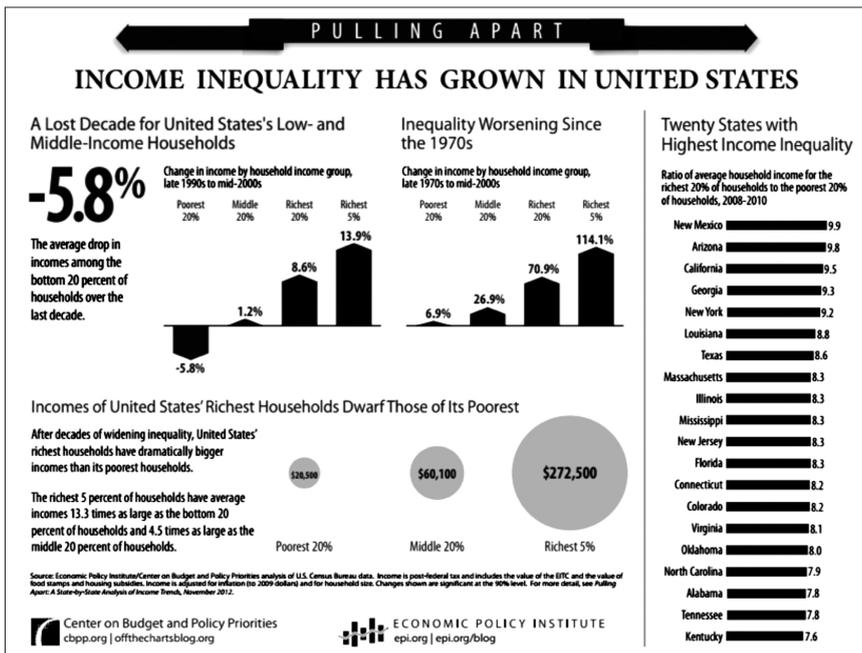
Source: *Detention Watch Network*, 2012.



The U.S. has similarly “outsourced” the detention of undocumented Latinos and others to private contractors, as the chart above shows. These private corporations enter into agreements with local and state governments who provide the prison space. The local community usually enters into these agreements seeking to remedy local economic problems. They see these prisons as an opportunity to make “money for nothing” (Barry 2010). But the reality is that the corporation has little financial risk and usually makes enormous profits from the ill-equipped and badly maintained immigrant detention facilities they operate, as the chart on CCA profits shows below (Ibid).

### 3. HARD TO CONTROL THE INSURGENTS, MIGRANTS, AND LATINOS

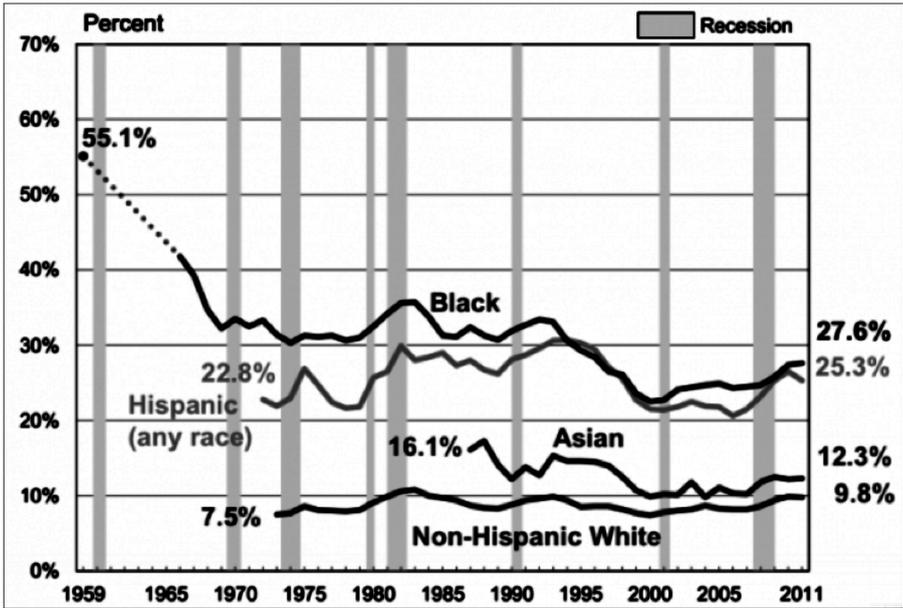
Clearly, racial and ethnic minorities do not pose any serious threat to destroy or weaken the U.S. the way radical Islamic insurgents or terrorists do (Berger). But one major similarity includes the fact that the U.S. could not control the Iraq insurgency with brute force. Brute force actually fueled the insurgency. Similarly, stronger border enforcement did not end the migration of Latinos across those borders. One major reason is that the U.S. continues to fuel that migration by disrupting the economies and the politics of Latin American nations as well as by demanding the cheap and disposable labor those Latinos provide in the U.S. to American industries (Porter).



Source: Economic Policy Institute/Center on Budget and Policy Priorities analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data. Income is post-federal tax and includes the value of the EITC and the value of food stamps and housing subsidies. Income is adjusted for inflation (to 2009 dollars) and for household size. Changes shown are significant at the 95% level. For more detail, see Pulling Apart: A State-by-State Analysis of Income Trends, November 2012.

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities  
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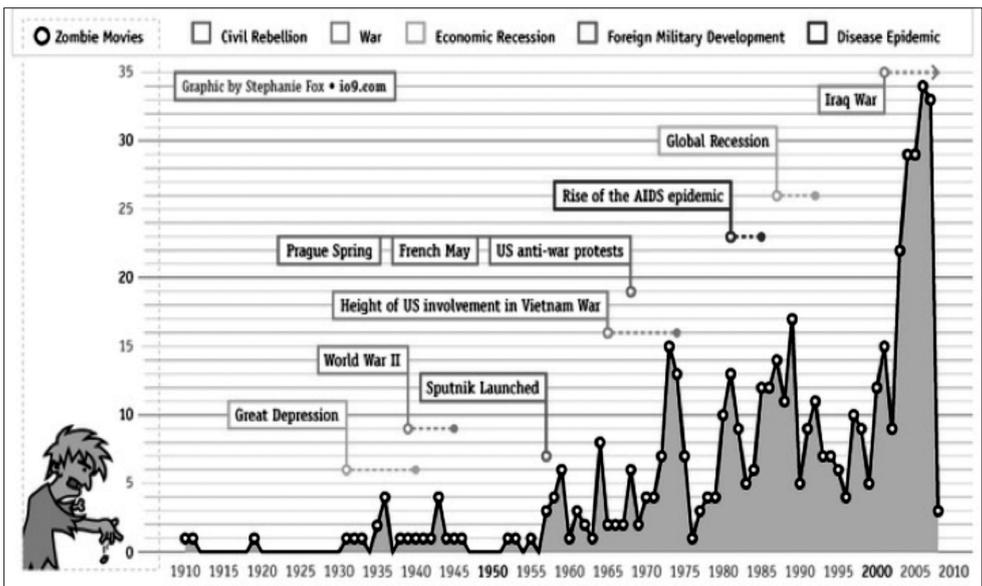
Source: Income, Poverty, and Insurance Coverage: 2011; D. S. Johnson, U.S. Census Bureau, 2012.

There are some additional contemporary political and economic realities in the U.S. that create a potential for future radicalization and a threat to the perceived sense of insecurity with regards to migration and minorities among some sectors of this society. Many economists have argued that the current economic reality appears to be a permanent rather than a typical cyclical downturn. This has made the growing economic inequality and persistent poverty in the U.S. also seem permanent and hard to eradicate (Buchheit). This potential for a revolt fueled by both growing inequality and racism has encouraged many urban police forces to develop harsh, desperate, and paranoid policies for policing minority communities (Greenwald).

Whether or not economic decline produces unrest is, perhaps, not as important as the belief that it will. Many policy experts have been predicting just that for a number of years. Harvard economist Kenneth Rogoff, for instance, predicted that sooner or later there would be serious “social unrest from the income disparities in the U.S.” (Lenzner). *Newsweek* reported that, in response to the economic decline and inequality, Americans were beginning to show not just “sadness and frustration, but also an inchoate rage.” (Dokoupil).

Even Moody, the financial services corporation, made global predictions that “future tax rises and spending cuts could trigger social unrest in a range of countries from the developing to the developed world” (Conway). And the U.S. War College issued a policy paper in 2008 warning that the emerging “unforeseen economic collapse,” could lead to “domestic resistance” and the “loss of functioning political and legal order” producing “widespread civil violence”. Perhaps the best indicator of a rising fear of civil unrest in the U.S. comes from the increasing prevalence of zombie movies in the last several years as the chart below demonstrates.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the attempt to contain Latinos and minority communities in the U.S. with radical new military technologies comes from several processes. These include rising inequality in the U.S., continued forced migration from Latin America, fear of minority unrest in the U.S., as well as the need by U.S. police forces to justify their budgets in a time of cutbacks have all created a ramped up (Witness for Peace). That these efforts, like those against insurgents in Iraq, will ultimately prove fruitless also seems to be understood to some extent. Witness the crass title of one Economist article on this issue. In September of 2011, *The Economist* titled an article on drug related violence and migration from Mexico as “Herding Cockroaches.”



Source: IO9.com: *We come from the future*, 2008.

#### 4. FOCUS ON PRE-EMPTION RATHER THAN JUSTICE

The pre-empting of migration, criminality, and resistance has also become a dominant theme in the government approach to Latinos. Some of that response may be a result of a widening inequality in the U.S. We appear to be in the midst of a structural economic adjustment that will likely mean an even greater and permanent decline in middle class jobs and incomes. This can only make matters worse for African American and Latino communities that are already disproportionately locked into the bottom rungs of this society and who expect to be denied any real upward movement.

The persistence of the prison-industrial complex means that police forces around the country are motivated to continue to churn out arrests and prisoners to satisfy economic and political needs of non-minority communities. Thus, witness the widespread use of “stop and frisk” methods of policing that research shows results in the arrest of a very small number of offenders. In recent courtroom testimony, one policeman testified that the New York City police “were expected to issue 20 summonses and make one arrest per month.” The presumption of guilt and the use of pre-fabricated arrest policies harass and essentially paint minority communities as criminal.

Police commissioners and mayors, like those in New York City, suggest that these pre-emptive tactics are what continue to keep their cities relatively crime free. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg actually claimed that the police “stop whites too much and minorities too little” (Peck). The Mayor and the police are not, apparently, aware of the bitter irony of their claims.

New York City had, last year, the lowest murder rate in thirty years! No one knows exactly why crime has dropped since it has also gone down in other cities where NYPD policies are not followed. And research shows that the police use of stop and frisk has more often discovered weapons and drugs on white New Yorkers than on Latinos and African Americans (Shen). Yet at a time of dramatic declines in crime, the NYPD is ramping up the use of more intrusive, unconstitutional, racist, and murderous police strategies.

Thus, the NYPD continues to use not just suspect and unconstitutional policies like stop and frisk, but biometric screening as well. Stop and frisk policies often produces fractious confrontations with innocent young African American and Latino young men and women as well as unnecessary police shootings. The result is the criminalization of Latino communities, in ways that are exactly like what the Iraqi people suffered at the hands of U.S. soldiers during the war.

Examples of this criminalization abound. New York City police have even turned to stalking minority “troubled youths” on Facebook. They began to use face-recognition

technology in 2012 to pre-empt crime. This includes following young African American and Latino youth on Facebook and on the streets “before” they become offenders (Ruderman). The police spend countless hours “daily monitoring the teenagers’ chatter — alert for talk of fights, party plans and criminal activities” (Ruderman).

The New York City police have also introduced a citywide surveillance system with live video feeds and a huge database (Harris). The police hope to be able to determine when “too many people congregate” so that the police can dispersed and intimidate them “simply by the risk of being identified - before dissent can coalesce” (Wolf). Minority youth are also subject to police attention in the public schools, which have long been criminalized.

As reporter Annette Fuentes argued, heightened security in these schools has come despite the fact that “school violence is not exploding” (MaxEternity). The presence of police in schools along with weapons detectors and surveillance cameras do but one thing - deliver more minority youth to the prison industrial complex (Fuentes). And because minority communities are so highly criminalized and militarized, private corporations have been the main beneficiaries, profiting greatly by supplying the technologies placed in the schools and communities (Ibid).

The shooting in Brooklyn’s Flatbush community on March 9, 2013 of a young African American teenager and the resulting riot demonstrated two main things (Goodman). One is that the police are increasingly threatened by communities that they fear and don’t understand. Like in Iraq, they will shoot first and ask questions later. Second is that these minority communities see themselves as an occupied people. They distrust and fear the police. And some, like that teenager maybe, are willing to take a stand and resist even against overwhelming odds (Ibid).

It’s true that there have been no recent significant civil rights or social justice movements that spring from racial or ethnic minority communities. However, the Occupy Wall-street Movement as well as sporadic protest to police brutality around the country not only raise the concern of government authorities, but accelerate the use of Iraq war techniques and technologies (Hedges).

So, while the civil unrest remains just a potential right now, police and other authorities are gearing up for that possibility by turning to the containment strategies learned in Iraq and Afghanistan. Those strategies are spilling into the policies and strategies of policing being tested and utilized in minority communities.

Some of the newest products of the wars, like biometric screening, are just now being introduced into urban policing (Homeland Security Newswire 2010). But there is already some use in border security, which would impact greatly on Latinos

(Homeland Security Newswire 2010b). The police departments around the nation see such criminalization and technology strategies as practical attempts to contain crime and to justify the size of their budgets. The New York City Police Department, for example, has 6,000 fewer officers today than in 2001 (Homeland Security Newswire 2010c).

Some may argue that these developments in urban policing are simply the evolution of criminal justice technology. It may even just represent the tapping of a new market by venture capitalists. Some financial experts, for instance, estimate that “the worldwide drone market could grow to \$90 billion in the next decade” (Sengupta). These things are all true. But they don’t, however, change the deep parallels that exist between the “war on terrorism” and the war on minority communities.

It’s possible to think of these similarities as mere coincidence. But that is only partially correct. There is no conspiracy behind these developments. But there is escalation, institutionalization, similarities between the failed strategies behind Iraq and Afghan wars and current attempts to deal with undocumented migration and minority communities in the U.S. The Obama Administration, like the Bush Administration before, has resorted to the same militarized strategies and policies to handle what it perceives to be real threats to its security. Those new methods and policies continue to flow into the U.S. as the Iraq and Afghan wars wind down and military contractors look for continuing sources of profit.

Ultimately, all states face a wall to continuation of their power. People “create” a state either as something better than the perceived coercive alternative or as an expression of their collective will and consciousness. Once created, states do all they can to maintain if not grow the power they receive from the people. They introduce symbols, like flags, to attach the people to the monster that is the state. They socialize the people from early ages with national anthems and solemn pledges. They ritualize behavior with state sanctioned holidays to create greater allegiance. But, ultimately, states are also victims. Thought it may sound strange, states, those artificial legal and social beings with monstrous powers to take life, liberty, and property, are also deeply vulnerable. States must confront the wall that is the large unknown of what goes on inside people’s heads.

Machiavelli understood that wall very well. He argued that the Prince (head of state) could protect his rule by instilling love in the people. Or he could rule by instilling fear. Machiavelli advises the prince to depend on fear because the people are not dependable. They may love you today but may not love tomorrow “whenever it suits their purpose” (Machiavelli 61). The people are simply too unstable, “ungrateful, voluble, dissemblers, anxious to avoid danger, and covetous of gain.” Machiavelli’s advice has

endured because every state ruler knows that his power depends on a people that the ruler may not fully understand and whose behavior the ruler cannot very well predict.

The Latino community has been largely unaware that they are more than key elements in debates about migration, poverty, and racism. Latinos don't realize that the U.S. state itself sees them as a corporeal threat. The reasons, as I have argued here, have as much to do with the state's fear of a vague and rootless opposition as with the ability of Latinos to foment actual insecurity for the state. Nevertheless, these byzantine state processes directly impact on Latino health, welfare, and freedom. In many ways, Latinos find themselves on the front lines as one of the U.S. states' perceived singular threats to its security and as a target of the state's assault on liberty and survival (Whitehead).

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See the work of Michael Schwartz on the use of aerial bombings in Iraq and Afghanistan: Engelhardt, T. "Tomgram: Michael Schwartz on Iraq as a Killing Ground". 10 January 2006. Web.

<sup>2</sup> A good timeline and set of resources on the Neo-Cons can be found at: "Reasons for Iraq War: Planning before 9/11". Web.

<sup>3</sup> This chart and more information on zombie movies can be found at: Newitz, A. "War and Social Upheaval Cause Spikes in Zombie Movie Production". Io9. 29 August 2008. Web.