PONTIFÍCIA UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA
DO RIO DE JANEIRO

YESA PORTELA ORMOND

ELUDING SECURITY: THE UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY AND THE PERSISTENCE OF "WARS ON TERRORS"

Tese de Doutorado

Thesis presented to the Programa de Pós-graduação em Relações Internacionais of PUC-Rio in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doutora em Relações Internacionais.

Advisor: Prof. Roberto Vilchez Yamato

Rio de Janeiro,
May 2024

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To my love and best friend, João Guilherme: thank you for being my steadfast companion during this adventure, for celebrating each triumph, and for comforting me during tough times.

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Abstract

Ormond, Yesa Portela; Yamato, Roberto Vilchez (Advisor). **Eluding Security: The United States Foreign Policy and the Persistence of Wars on Terrors.** Rio de Janeiro, 2024. 386p. Tese de Doutorado – Instituto de Relações Internacionais, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro.

The starting point of this dissertation lies in the question: What is it about the "War on Terror" that provides a persistent narrative that remains structuring the terms of the U.S. foreign policy during the 21st century? Regarding this research problem, a twofold argument is formulated: First, I argue that the "War on Terror" is an opaque, blurred figure in the U.S. foreign policy; a structure with a center that has no natural site and that keeps being re-fulfilled, re-written and re-signified; a groundless ground; a specter-to-come that haunts and eludes US "foreign policy" and "security." I insist that this opaque, blurred figure benefits from the images of "enemies" whose faces, characteristics, and territories are only provisionally identified; from the impossibility of indefinitely defining what "terror" and "terrorists" mean and are; and from the entanglement of these "signifiers" – i.e., these specters –, over the U.S. history, with those of "Indigenous Peoples," the "Black enslaved population," the "poor white servants (Irish, Scottish, Germans)," "Suffragists," "Latin immigrants," "drug dealers," "Muslims," "Arabs," "antifascists," "white supremacists," and so on. Second, I argue that the U.S. "War on Terror" has been "eluding security" not only because "terrorism" and "terrorists" are elusive, but because "security" is, itself, elusive. This way, this dissertation proposes that instead of a "War on Terror," we must, even if provisionally, refer to "Wars on Terrors" that have been eluding U.S. "security." To illustrate this argument, I undertake an extensive analysis of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors," with help of the Derridean deconstructive reading, associated with the contributions of Reinhart Koselleck. This way, I pay special attention to the U.S. foreign policy and to how its "Wars on Terrors" have been continuously waged against multiple constitutive outside(r)s of the USA. Also, I direct special –but not exclusive – focus to the "Wars on Terrors" of the 21st century and to the images of "Arabs, Middle Easterners, and Muslims as 'essentially terrorists';" "im/migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees as 'terrorists in the making';" and the entanglement of "antifascists and white supremacists as 'domestic terrorists'." After this extensive work, I make

two suggestions: first, I insist on the importance of interpreting interpretations more than we interpret things and that instead taking abstractions for granted we must be attentive to how they are both productive and violent. Second, I suggest that "(in)security," "terrorism," and "terrorists" are constitutive outside(r)s of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors," and that, in so being, closure of this persistent, elusive scenario becomes impossible without shaking the apparently well built, tenacious grounds of the United States itself.

Keywords
Terrorism; Foreign Policy; Security; Deconstruction; United States.

Resumo

Ormond, Yesa Portela; Yamato, Roberto Vilchez (Orientador). **Escapando (d)a segurança: A política externa dos Estados Unidos e a persistência de Guerras aos Terrores.** Rio de Janeiro, 2024. 386p. Tese de Doutorado - Instituto de Relações Internacionais, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro.

Esta dissertação tem como ponto de partida a pergunta: O que proporciona à "Guerra ao Terror" uma narrativa persistente que continua a influenciar os termos da política externa dos Estados Unidos ao longo do século XXI? Em relação ao problema de pesquisa, elabora-se um duplo argumento: o primeiro é o de que a "Guerra ao Terror" é uma figura opaca e borrada na política externa dos Estados Unidos; uma estrutura com um centro que não tem um local natural e que continua sendo (re)preenchida, (re)escrita e (re)significada; um terreno sem fundamento; um espectro-a-vir que assombra e escapa das categorias de "política externa" e "segurança" dos EUA. A partir deste argumento, insisto que esta figura opaca e borrada se beneficia de imagens de inimigos cujos rostos, características e territórios são apenas provisoriamente identificados. Mais que isso, insisto que essa situação é facilitada pela impossibilidade de definir definitivamente o que significam e são "terror" e "terroristas"; e do entrelaçamento desses "significantes" – i.e., destes espectros – ao longo da história dos EUA, com aqueles dos "povos Indígenas", da "população negra escravizada", dos "servos brancos pobres (irlandeses, escoceses, alemães)", das "sufragistas", dos "imigrantes latinos", dos "traficantes de drogas", dos "muçulmanos", dos "árabes", dos "antifascistas", dos "supremacistas brancos", e assim por diante. Em segundo lugar, argumento que a "Guerra ao Terror" dos Estados Unidos tem "escapado (d)a segurança" não apenas porque o "terrorismo" e os "terroristas" são elusivos, mas também porque a noção de "segurança", em si, é elusiva na política externa dos EUA. Desse modo, nesta tese proponho que a ideia de "Guerra ao Terror" seja deslocada e que falemos, ainda que provisoriamente, em "Guerras aos Terrores" – "Guerras aos Terrores" estas que indefinidamente escampam (d)a segurança dos Estados Unidos. Para ilustrar esse argumento conto com a ajuda da leitura desconstrucionista Derridiana, associada às contribuições de Reinhart Koselleck. Assim, realizo uma análise voltada para a política externa dos Estados Unidos e para o modo como "Guerras aos Terrores"

são travadas contra múltiplos foras(teiros) constitutivos dos Estados Unidos. Nesse sentido, meu olhar se direciona, ainda que não exclusivamente, às "Guerras aos Terrores" do século XXI – mais especificamente às imagens de "árabes, pessoas do Oriente Médio e muçulmanos como 'essencialmente terroristas'"; de "imigrantes, requerentes de asilo e refugiados como 'terroristas em construção'"; e para o entrelaçamento de "antifascistas e adeptos da supremacia branca como 'terroristas domésticos'". Realizada essa extensiva análise, sugiro, em primeiro lugar, a importância de interpretar interpretações mais do que interpretar coisas e de, assim, não tomar abstrações como certas, senão como produtivas e violentas. Em segundo lugar, sugiro que "(in)segurança", "terrorismo" e "terroristas" são foras(teiros) constitutivos das "Guerras aos Terrores" e que, por isso, há impossibilidade de encerramento deste persistente e elusivo cenário sem que os Estados Unidos também tenham seus "fundamentos" – apenas aparentemente bem fundamentados – abalados.

Palavras-chave
Terrorismo; Política Externa; Segurança; Desconstrução; Estados Unidos.

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J’adore parler de rien. C’est le seul domaine où j’ai de vagues connaissances.

Oscar Wilde

1
Introduction

> Take the abstractions for granted, and we miss a very large part of what counts as politics, as well as what might be interesting and productive among all those things that are going on.
>
> R. B. J. Walker (2018, p. 5).

Thinking about the United States of America (USA) is an appealing activity, not only to scholars, but also to analysts, politicians, the media in general and to those who are interested in what is going on in the international arena. Undoubtedly, we have been continually suggested to think, talk and write about what was/is going on in the USA because of the possibility of Donald Trump's return in the 2024 Presidential Election; because of the 2020 Presidential Election and Joseph Biden's 2021 Inauguration; because of the January 6, 2021 assault on the Capitol; because of the disastrous U.S.[1] withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021; because of its population's persistent hesitancy and refusal of taking COVID-19 vaccines during a worldly and deadly pandemic; because of the way the Biden administration is dealing with white supremacists; because in 2022 Biden pardoned thousands of people convicted of Marijuana Possession – which represented a transformation in the way the USA dealt with a drug that has received central and aggressive cultural and policing attention for a long time; because of the U.S. position towards the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022; and because of the U.S. position *vis à vis* Israel and Palestine.

Also because of how Donald Trump's administration (2016-2021) dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic; with the Black Live's Matter (BLM) and antifa protests; with the continuous expansion and prosperity of the People's Republic of China (PRC); with technologies such as the 5G and Tik Tok; with the increasing flow of international im/migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; with the alarming alt-right expansion; and with the deep-rooted U.S. interventions in the Middle East (Atlantic Council, 2021; Federal Register, 2020; Hart, 2021; Herb et al., 2022; Mallinder, 2023; Republican Platform, 2016; The New York Times, 2020a; 2020b; 2020c;

[1] Throughout this dissertation, I refer to the USA when I mention the "United States of America" as a noun. However, when it appears as an adjective, I refer to it as U.S., as in "U.S. foreign policy."

2020d; 2021a; 2021b; Shear and Kanno-Youngs, 2022; The Washington Post, 2016; Trump-Pence, 2020; Vinjamuri, 2023; Watkins and Phillip, 2018; The White House, 2021).

We can also look slightly back to when we were constantly listening to/ reading analyses on (or analyzing) how Barack Obama's administration (2009-2016) and its supporters were extremely optimistic about the possibility of meaningful change in US inter/national politics – whether regarding the creation of a path to citizenship for "undocumented migrants" or the possibility of turning the country's attention to the Asia-Pacific region, in what was coined a *Pivot to Asia Strategy* (The White House, 2020). This confidence also encompassed the possibility of changing the U.S. actions/behavior on the "War on Terror" – through promises such as those of closing Guantánamo Bay and ending the military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, not long after, this optimism did not reach its goals (Jackson, 2011).

If we still keep going back, it is possible to think about the U.S. actions during the 21st century, starting with the Bush administration (2001-2009), and to acknowledge that particularly since the "September 11, 2001 attacks" – on the World Trade Center, in New York, and on the Pentagon, in Washington – special attention has been dedicated to combat an invisible enemy, i.e., "terror,"[2] "terrorism" and/or "the terrorist" (Pinto, 2003; Ricks, 2006; Scahill, 2014; The National Security Strategy…, 2002; White House, 2008; White House, 2011).

We could still keep going further back and thinking about how William (Bill) Clinton's "three strikes and you are out" law or Ronald Reagan's "War on Drugs" did and still do more harm than good; or, even further back, when the "Punitive Expedition" against paramilitary Mexican forces led by Pancho Villa (1916-1917) and the search for the Apache Kid (1892-?) allowed for militarized interstate manhunts (MIM) (Ruback, 2023); how, during the 16th century, the (not yet) USA drew the color line[3] in promoting the slavery, murder and rape of Africans who

[2] In this text, I consider concepts such as "terror," "terrorism," "enemy," "threat," "terrorist" – to name only a few – fluid, polysemic, unstable and easily manipulable. This way, I opt to single them out within quotation marks in order to avoid any possibility of closing their meaning(s). I also single out other words that I consider pivotal to this dissertation and that, although widely invoked as ready-to-hand watchwords, hold the same unstable, fluid qualities.

[3] This is an expression presented by W. E. B. Du Bois and used by Howard Zinn (2017) to talk about the horrors of slavery in the USA. In 1910 W. E. B. Du Bois published an article called *The Souls of the White Folk*. In this article, he presents the "problem of the color line" that not only would be

were sold as merchandise, treated as something less than human and tore apart from their lands and their families; or how hospitable Indigenous people (later named native *Americans*) were also murdered, mutilated, raped – that is, we could observe how they violently *encountered* what later on became the USA (Doty, 1996; Zinn, 2015). We could also go on and on in observing how, whenever some *different* peoples "resurrected – they were the enemy, their actions should be suffocated, and if needed, they were murdered as well" (Zinn, 2015, p. 44). In any of these aforementioned cases, the (hi)story feels oddly familiar and, at the same time, unprecedented (Walker, 2018).

Needless to say, numerous analysts, activists, commentators, politicians, and scholars – who are affiliated to varied ideological spectrums – have scrutinized the U.S. actions, paying special attention to the meaning of "terror/ism" and its relation to contemporary U.S. foreign policy. Countless analyses tend to focus specially on the causes of / the roots of "terrorism" (Lewis, 2002; 2003; Lahoud, 2022) and on the consequences of U.S. actions against "terrorism" – especially with regard to the Bush administration and its actions towards Afghanistan and Iraq (see Ali, 2003; Arraes, 2009; Bijos, 2009; Carothers, 2003; Chomsky, 2011; Demant, 2004; Diniz, 2009; Gause III, 2009; Keegan, 2005; Kiernan, 2009; Laipson, 2003; Lopes, 2009; Mann, 2006; Pinto, 2003; Robins, 2009; to name a few) and to those considered "terrorists" (Amnesty International, 2017; Butler and Spivak, 2007; Fakoff, 2007; Owens, 2010; Pitter, 2016; Ruback, 2023; Scahill, 2014; Slahi, 2015; Wilcox, 2015).

There is also, by now, a considerable literature that pays special attention to emotions, to aesthetic, to discursive formations, to ideas and ideologies, to images, to memories, to sexuality, and to the narratives of the so-called "War on Terror" (see Abrahamian, 2003; Bleiker, 2001; Bonditti, 2014; Dixit, 2014; Jackson, 2011, 2016; Mitchell, 2007; Oren and Solomon, 2015; Puar, 2007; Resende, 2010; Said, 2007; Solomon, 2012; 2015; Weber, 2005; Zehfuss, 2003; to name *only* a few). In this sense, it is evident that much has already been said about the U.S. engagement in the "War on Terror." And much is still being said especially because 2021 was

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a problem of the 20th century, but also a problem that was the condition of possibility of a world that believed that it was "white and wonderful" and, as a consequence, promoted injustices and violences against those who did not fit the white borders of this color line (Du Bois, 1910).

the 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks (Byman, 2021; Kurtz-Phelan, 2021; Lahoud, 2021; Moody, 2021; Rhodes, 2021).

Certainly, many of us – International Relations (IR) academics – have something to say about "terrorism" (Bonditti, 2014), the "War on Terror," or about "September 11" – "*le 11 Septembre*" – for we have not forgotten it (Derrida in Borradori, 2003; Zehfuss, 2003). However, in this dissertation, facing a myriad of possibilities and choices, where so much is going on (Walker *et al.* 2018), I suggest that it is possible to dispute and to complicate accepted understandings – especially those which have been exhaustively studied, for in them lie "ambiguity, uncertainty" and the possibility of "ceaseless questioning of identity" (Ashley and Walker, 1990, p. 263). More than that, I suggest that it is important to question accepted understandings and to expose them "as arbitrary [...] rather than unproblematic" (Ashley, 1988, p. 229).

Following these reflections I mentioned and adding and mixing them with everything I have learned in the last few years as an Undergraduate student, a master's student, and PhD student in International Relations (IR)[4], I could say that I remain interested, intrigued, and bothered[5] by the notion of a "War on Terror" carried out by the U.S. foreign policy. This interest is due to my previous interests as a researcher[6], but it also exists because, during my PhD admission interview, and in conversations with professors, colleagues, and friends, many were the attempts to convince me to stop looking at something already "known" by "everybody" – whatever these two keywords might mean. This research is, then, first and foremost, the result of discomforts and stubbornness.

At the risk of sounding repetitive, I am aware a lot has already been said about the "War on Terror" (see Abrahamian, 2003; Ayerbe, 2018; Bandeira, 2009;

[4] In this dissertation, the term "International Relations," with capital letters, refers to the discipline of IR, while "international relations," with lower case initials, refers to the political, social, historical, cultural and juridical realms that IR studies academically.

[5] On my first day as a PhD student, in 2019, during an *International Political Theory Class*, professor R. B. J. Walker, while talking to us about our research interests, provocatively asked: "What bothers you?" After reflecting upon this question for a long time, I reached out the conclusion that research(ing) involves not only intellectual interests, but also makes us feel something: may it be curiosity, anger, happiness, sadness, or anxiety.

[6] See, for example, Ormond, Yesa Portela. Iraque em Crise: O modelo de Política Externa Estadunidense como fator principal na deterioração do Estado (1990-2003) / Yesa Portela Ormond. – Santana do Livramento: Universidade Federal do Pampa, 2015; and Ormond, Yesa Portela. Construindo subjetividades: a representação do Iraque no governo de George W. Bush. 2018. 180 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Relações Internacionais) – Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2018.

Bleiker, 2003; Blix, 2004; Butler, 2004, 2018; Cowan, 2008; Gomes, 2012, 2018; Gonçalves e Teixeira, 2019; Jackson, 2011; 2016; Kiras, 2013; Mann, 2006; Mendes, 2016; Owens, 2010; Pecequilo, 2003; Pecequilo e Forner, 2017; Puar, 2007; Resende 2010, 2012, 2013; Riks, 2006; Scahill, 2014; Solomon, 2012; Weber, 2002, 2013; Yongtao, 2010; Zehfuss, 2009, etc.), and I am also aware that each and every work goes through a different path – be it historical, theoretical, focused on "traditional security studies," "critical security studies," "development studies," "aesthetic studies," "affective studies," "gender studies," "terrorism studies," "critical terrorism studies" and so on.

Regardless, all attempts to move me away from this subject "exhaustively analyzed" and "known by everybody," as well as the extensive literature which could have discouraged me, only helped to bring me closer to it. This happened especially after I understood that I do not intend to look for something new – "new" as in "not existing before; recently made, invented, introduced, etc." (Oxford Dictionary, 2022, n.p.). And, although this affirmation may sound counterintuitive – since a doctoral dissertation requires "novelty" – I show in the next pages that I do not look for something new because "[n]eophilia may discourage us from re-evaluating our assumptions" (Neal, 2019, p. 11). Rather, I go after discomfort and disorientation.

To elaborate further, it is important to highlight that, in my reflections about the U.S. foreign policy during 21st century, I observed that the "fear" of "terrorism" and/or the "need" to deal with "it" did not manifest itself only when some people coordinated the attacks on the Twin Towers, in New York, and on the Pentagon, in Washington[7] (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks…, 2004). Rather, I also observed this "fear/need" when the Bush administration invaded Iraq in order to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime and tried to promote the de-Ba'athification[8]

[7] According to the *National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, "This immeasurable pain was inflicted by nineteen young Arabs acting at the behest of Islamist extremists headquartered in distant Afghanistan. Some had been in the United States for more than a year, mixing with the rest of the population. Though four had training as pilots, most were not well-educated. Most spoke English poorly, some hardly at all. In groups of four or five, carrying with them only small knives, box cutters, and cans of Mace or pepper spray, they had hijacked the four planes and turned them into deadly guided missiles" (2004, n.p.).

[8] As Sissons and Al-Saiedi (2013) show "[i]n Saddam Hussein's Iraq, membership in the Ba'ath party was the standard requirement for state employment, creating a hegemonic party with a foothold in every public institution and all corners of society" (n.p.). However, after 2003, the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) started a de-Ba'athification process. The CPA claimed this

of that country (Tripp, 2007); when people were indefinitely detained and tortured in Abu Ghraib (Gourevitch and Morris, 208) and in Guantánamo Bay (Anistia Internacional, 2017; Butler, 2018; Slahi, 2015); when more than 5,400 children were separated from their parents (NBC, 2019); when "among other actions, Executive Order 13769 suspended for 90 days the entry of certain aliens from seven countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen," because, supposedly, "these are countries that had already been identified as presenting heightened concerns about *terrorism* and travel to the United States" (US Embassy…, 2017, n.p.); when "antifa" and "white supremacists" – whose positions toward race, gender, and social matters are completely incompatible – were both designated "domestic terrorists" and/or "violent extremists" (Memorandum on Inadmissibility…, 2021; National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism, 2021, n.p.); and so on.

This way, while reflecting upon the "War on Terror," and after numerous conversations, readings and advising sessions, I kept wondering if the "War on Terror" still was an important chapter in the U.S. "foreign policy." In other words, the first (embryonic) questions that came to my mind were: Is the "War on Terror" *still a thing* in the United States? Is it still an important chapter in the U.S. foreign policy? And even though in a doctoral dissertation it would be naive to ask a "yes/no" question, I started with the assumption – further explained in the pages that follow – that *yes, it is still an important chapter in the U.S. foreign policy*. More than that, I understood that what I had in mind was that "Wars on Terrors" – in the plural – *persist* in the USA. However, it would be overly ingenuous and simplistic to assume that questions like these could be easily posed and answered.

Additionally, certain presuppositions, already mentioned in the previous pages, continued to resurface in my reflections. The foremost among them is my observation of the *persistent* tendency in U.S. "foreign policy" to resort to violence against unwelcome, outside(r) "enemies," i.e. "terrorism" and "terrorists" – whether through interventions and wars in "foreign" territories or through the criminalization, persecution, detention, torture, prohibition, and/or extermination of

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approach would transform Iraq and erode the Baath party's authoritarian, problematic influence. However, according to the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ, 2013), not only did this process lead to the dismissal of thousands of employees, but it also deviated from due process, fostering grievance among Iraqis and contributing to the emergence of extensive social and political conflicts in the subsequent years.

these very "enemies." Secondly, concerning the USA, its "foreign policy," and the "War on Terror," I understood that I had been observing (hi)stories that felt oddly familiar and, at the same time, unprecedented. Lastly, I stubbornly acknowledged that an extensive body of work on a subject does not imply there is nothing more to add to the analysis.

This way, in order not to ask a simple "yes/no" question, and after reflecting on what (I thought) I already knew, I started to face the following question, which both informs and unsettles this dissertation: *What is it about the "War on Terror" that provides a persistent narrative that remains structuring the terms of the US foreign policy during the 21st century?*[9]

With regard to this question, my thesis is twofold. First, I argue that the "War on Terror" is an opaque, blurred figure in the U.S. foreign policy; a structure with a center that has no natural site and that keeps being re-fulfilled, re-written and re-signified (Campbell, 1998; Derrida, 1978); a groundless ground (Marchart, 2007; Yamato, 2021); a specter-*to-come*[10] that haunts (Derrida, 2006) and *eludes*[11] U.S. "foreign policy" and "security." I insist that this opaque, blurred figure benefits from invoking "faceless" and "de-territorialized" strange, alien outside(r)s – i.e. enemies whose faces, characteristics, and territories are only provisionally *identified*; from the impossibility of *definitely defining* what "terror" and "terrorists" mean and are; and from the entanglement of these "signifiers", over the U.S. history, with those of "Indigenous Peoples," the "Black enslaved population," the "poor white servants (Irish, Scottish, Germans)," "Suffragists," "Latin immigrants," "drug dealers," "Muslims," "Arabs," "antifascists," "white supremacists," and many other outside(r)s (Said, 2007; Zinn, 2015; Viana and Silva, 2021; Speckhard, 2020; FBI, 2023).

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[9] It is important to highlight that this question relies on many contributions, such as those of Angharad Closs Stephens' (2013) reflections on the *persistence* of nationalism. In her work, Stephens (2013) wonders: "Why should nationalism appear persistent, despite the many different attempts over the past quarter-century or so at contesting its founding assumptions?" (2013, p. 1) and "[w]hat is it about nationalism, then, that secures this capacity to offer a persuasive narrative, and to keep on structuring the terms of political assembly and struggle?" (2013, p. 1).

[10] As Derrida (2016 [1976] p. 144) puts it "[t]he future can be anticipated only in the form of an absolute danger. It is that which breaks absolutely with constituted normality and can therefore only announce itself, present itself, in the species of monstrosity."

[11] I would like to thank professors Erica Resende and Paula Sandrin for presenting (both showing and gifting) me (with) this word, both in English (*to elude*) and Portuguese (*escorregar, escapar, fugir, esquivar-se*), while evaluating, and contributing to, my dissertation proposal.

Second, I argue that the U.S. "War on Terror" has been "eluding security" not only because "terrorism" and "terrorists" are elusive, but because "security" is, itself, elusive. Because of that, I acknowledge that neither would it be possible for the USA to identify and combat "urgent matters of security," nor would it be simple for that country to suggest it has been dealing with "terrorism" were it not for authoritative, iterable, yet fragile, claims – such as those of National Security Strategies, Executive Orders, State of the Union Addresses, Crime Resource Manuals, Memoranda, Resolutions, Acts, Party Platforms, Law Enforcement Bulletins, etc. – which attempt to define "foreign policy matters," "security matters," "terrorism," as well as who/what must be secured[12].

Who or what are the U.S. "*dangerous terrorist enemies*," after all? Are "they" those men who have flown two planes into the twin towers? Were "they" those *Ba'athists* that remained in power in Iraq from 1968 to 2003? Were "they" those people detained and tortured in Abu Ghraib? Are "they" the members of Taliban active in Afghanistan since 1994? Are "they" immigrants forbidden to get into the USA? Were "they" those people killed "incidentally" by drones, a.k.a. "war casualties?" Are "they" those detainees indefinitely imprisoned and tortured in Guantánamo Bay? Are "they" Muslims? Are "they" Arabs? Are "they" Sikhs? Are "they" Mexicans? Are "they" those 5,400 children separated from their parents? Are "they" those who protested the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor? Are "they" those people who assaulted the Capitol on January 6th? Are "they" those who have an "essential dissymmetry" when compared to "us"? Is "terror" a state of mind? Is "terror" a real threat? (Balibar, 2017; Butler, 2018; Campbell, 1998; Delumeau, 2009; Gourevitch and Morris, 2008; Homeland Security, 2018; NBC, 2019; Scahill, 2014; Stampnitzky, 2013; The New York Times, 2021b; Whittaker, 2005).

With these questions in mind, and because of the twofold argument offered here, I suggest, throughout the following chapters, that instead of a "War on Terror," we must think of "Wars on Terrors." In other words, I *do not* argue that the "War on Terror" *is* or *was* something. Rather, I argue that "Wars on Terrors" are

[12] This play of words alludes to Michel Foucault's well-known work *Society must be defended* (2019 [1976]).

persistently in the process of *becoming, haunting* and *eluding*[13] U.S. "foreign policy" and "security" (Bousquet, Grove and Shah, 2020; Derrida, 1988). This way, I understand that the USA is unceasingly and intimately engaged with – and against – "Wars on Terrors." Because of that, I also acknowledge that "terrorism" is a constitutive outside and "terrorists" are constitutive outsiders of the USA, and that, among them, a blurred, rhizomatic, already contaminated, spectral relationship takes place. This way, it appears that any closure of this *persistent*, elusive scenario becomes impossible without shaking the apparently well built, tenacious grounds of the USA itself.

In this vast and complex scenario, I specifically pay attention to the U.S. "foreign policy" that imposes violent "Wars on Terrors" in the 21st century (2021-2023) regarding three spheres: that of Guantánamo bay, where detainees keep being tortured and indefinitely held (International Amnesty, 2017; Pitter, 2016; Rosenberg, 2019; Reuters, 2023); that of discriminatory attempts carried out to ban the entry of "certain aliens" – immigrants, refugees and asylums seekers – in the territory of the USA, in order to "protect the nation from foreign terrorist entry" (US Embassy…, 2017, p. 8977)[14]; and that of antifa and white supremacists[15] whose manifestations – despite their complete different and irreconcilable agendas – were/are considered of "domestic terrorists" (FBI, 2023; National Security Council, 2021; Speckhard, 2020; The White House, 2021a; Viana and Silva, 2021). In this sense, I could say that, in this dissertation, I pay attention to (and pose)

[13] It is important to highlight that this idea did not come out of nothing. We are always haunted and inspired by ideas of those who we have listened to and read. In addition to learning this verb – *to elude* – with professors Paula Sandrin and Erica Resende, in this *play of words*, when I say "haunt*ing* security" or "elud*ing* security" I am in debt of David Campbell's (1998[1992]) *Writing Security*, for his writings have been helping me reflect upon the United States foreign policy security practices since my master's thesis.

[14] This excerpt refers to the Executive Order 13769 which later on was replaced by the *Proclamation on Ending Discriminatory Bans on Entry to The United States* on January 20, 2021, by President Joseph R. Biden (2021 -).

[15] These names are properly explored in chapter 4, section 4.6. For now, suffice to say that "antifa" is commonly used as short for "antifascism" and represents a decentralized political movement of people who stand against "fascism" – as well as against "racism," "sexism," "LGBTQIA+phobia," "xenophobia," etc. "White supremacists" on the other hand, and as the name indicate, is used here to refer to people who believe in "racial supremacy" and therefore belong to racist, misogynist groups which, in turn, propagate (symbolical and material) hate against minorities.

questions that some would consider "important to the real world" (King, Keohane and Verba, 1994, p. 15)[16].

"What do you mean by "persistence," "haunting" and "eluding?" – the reader could ask. Before diving into theoretical and academic literature, which I do in the following pages and chapters, I first resorted to dictionaries, namely, the Thesaurus, where I looked for synonyms, then, the Oxford Learner's Dictionary and, finally, to try to *feel* these meanings, I looked for help at the Online [Brazilian] Portuguese Dictionary – for these are the shortcuts I take when I have to face a new concept / idea/ name/ verb.

In this sense, when I looked for synonyms of the verb "to persist," I came across definitions such as: "to carry on," "to continue," "to persevere," "to prevail," "to remain," "to be stubborn," etc. After that, when I looked up at the Oxford Learner's Dictionary for the meaning of the noun "persistence," I found the following definitions: "1) the fact of continuing to try to do something despite difficulties, especially when other people are against you and think that you are being annoying or unreasonable;" and "2) the state of continuing to exist for a long period of time" (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 2021, n.p.). Finally, when I looked up at the Online [Brazilian] Portuguese Dictionary, and searched for the meaning of "Persistente," I found the following definitions: "1) Duradouro; sem interrupção; em que há persistência e continuidade: tosse persistente; 2) [Botânica] Diz-se do que continua por um período posterior ao seu desaparecimento, embora atrofiado ou pouco desenvolvido: folhas persistentes [...]" (2021, n.p) [17].

I also started to think about what "to haunt" could mean. Repeating the same movement, the synonyms I found regarding the verb "to haunt" referred to: "to annoy," "to bedevil," "to obsess," "to terrify," "to terrorize," "to torment," "to

[16] I am aware that such a statement supports an assumption – about "reality," the "real," and the "real world" – which is precisely what "poststructuralists" and/or Derridean authors strongly put into question (see, for example: Zehfuss, Maja. 2002. Constructivism in International Relations. The Politics of Reality. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). However, in this dissertation I remind the reader that even though we can – and must – question conceptions and politics of "reality," we must also remember that what surround us is conceived and treated – identified, supposedly grasped – as "real," factual, material, grounded, certain, and clear. This way, and as I show in the next pages, even though I think of groundlessness and elusiveness where some may observe concreteness and foundations, I chose to refer to this famous quote by "KKV" (1994) as both a reminder that we constantly speak of, think of, and conceive of a "real world", and that this "politics of reality" is the condition of possibility of "what matters" – and, of course, of what "is" *matter* (material).

[17] "Lasting; with no interruptions; [a process] in which there is persistence and continuity: persistent cough; 2) [Botany] It is said of what continues for a period after its disappearance, although stunted or underdeveloped: persistent leaves […]" (Dicio, 2021, n.p., my translation).

trouble," etc. At the Oxford Learner's Dictionary (2022, n. p.) I came across definitions that stated that "to haunt" means: "1) haunt something / somebody – if the ghost of a dead person haunts a place, people say that they have seen it there; 2) haunt somebody – if something unpleasant haunts you, it keeps coming to your mind so that you cannot forget it; 3) haunt somebody – to continue to cause problems for somebody for a long time." Finally, when I looked at the Online [Brazilian] Portuguese Dictionary, "'assombrar" was presented as follows: "1) Causar assombro, deixar atônito; espantar, aterrorizar, consternar: eram casos que assombravam o doente; 2) Maravilhar, causar admiração: a inteligência do aluno assombrava os colegas; 3) Sobressaltar-se, maravilhar-se: ele se assombra facilmente"[18].

I also had to reflect upon the meaning of the verb "to elude." In this sense, the synonyms of "to elude" I came across were quite interesting: "to confound," "to evade," "to flee," "to frustrate," "to outrun," "to get away from," "to beat around the bush," and so on. It also appeared in the Oxford Learner's Dictionary (2022, n.p.) as follows:

> 1) elude somebody / something: to manage to avoid or escape from somebody / something, especially in a clever way. * The two men managed to elude the police for six weeks. * How did the killer elude detection for so long?; 2) elude somebody if something eludes you, you are not able to achieve it, or not able to remember or understand it. * He was extremely tired, but sleep eluded him. * They're a popular band but chart success has eluded them so far. * Finally, he remembered the tiny detail that had eluded him the night before.

While reflecting upon these definitions and trying to understand them under a theoretical umbrella, I came across to what Derrida calls, in *Signature Event Context* (1988), and in *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences* (1978) "iterability," that is a "structure of repeatability," a "logic that ties repetition to alterity" (Royle, 2003, p. 67). I also came across with the idea of *structural iterability*, introduced by Reinhart Koselleck (2004; 2018), in which it is possible to understand that human experiences are organized by a here/there, an

[18] In English, it could be translated as follows: "1) To cause astonishment, to astonish; frighten, terrify, dismay: these were cases that *haunted* the sick; 2) To amaze, to cause admiration: the student's intelligence amazed his colleagues; 3) To be startled, to marvel: he is easily startled" (Dicio, 2022, n.p., my translation).

inside/outside, an on this side/on that side, a familiar/a foreigner, a known/unknown (Hoffman and Franzel, 2018; Koselleck, 2018, p. 204) and by the political instrumentalizations of languages that, even if changing over time, are capable of creating and maintaining "enmity lines."[19]

With the help of these notions, when I say "Wars on Terrors" *persist, haunt* and *elude* the U.S. foreign policies I mean that this *proper name*, this *declaration of war*, these condemned wars (Ali, 2003) carry with them the "capacity to be repeated in principle again and again in all sorts of contexts ('no context permits saturation'), at the same time as being in some way singular every time ('no meaning can be determined out of context')" (Derrida, 1978; Royle, 2003, p. 67); and that it depends on boundary demarcations, that is, on violent asymmetrical demarcations that operate "when they block contacts, inhibit compromises, when consensus-building only serves to stoke conflict, unleash civil or foreign wars, and enable mass murder" (Koselleck, 2018, p. 198).

This way, in this dissertation, I analyze how the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" discourses – or *textiles*, as I call them latter on[20]– draw out on boundary-drawing processes that are never completely achieved, that elude completion, but are performances that constantly require being reiterated (Bialasiewicz *et al*., 2007; Epstein, 2017; Ashley, 1987; Vaughan-Williams, 2009; Walker, 2009; Lindahl, 2013). Or, as Hirst and Thomassen (2019) put it, "[i]n an always-deferred future to come, then, something is affirmed", that is, *in an always-deffered future to come, then, "Wars on Terrors" are persistently (re)affirmed* in the U.S. foreign policy and, in so doing, *they haunt and elude security.* More than that, in this process I draw attention to how "through the differences that make up everyday life in civil

[19] It is important to point out that Reinhart Koselleck is not considered a "poststructural" thinker, nor does he mention in his writings that he works through "poststructural" lenses. Rather, he is considered a *structuralist*. To illustrate that, we should note that the word "structure" is an important one in his work. In *Futures Past* (2004), for example, he wrote a chapter named "*History, Histories, and Formal Time Structures*" and another one named "*Representation, Event and Structure*." However, in my reading, "poststructuralists" do not deny the works of "structuralists." On the contrary, they try to advance, challenge, and work with what has been produced by structuralists. In this sense, and as I show in the following pages, I think it is possible to establish a dialogue with Jacque's Derrida notions of *iterability* and *hauntology* and those of Koselleck's that regard to *structural iterability* and *asymmetrical counterconcepts.* Indeed, they are not completely convergent, but they do not exclude each other mutually either. Also, both Derrida and Koselleck, in their own different ways, are readers of Heidegger and Husserl, which can suggest a common background between them. This way, I chose to pay attention to those contributions of Derrida and Koselleck which can be thought of as complementary.

[20] The idea of "text as text-ile" (Spivak, 2016, p. 575) conceives of texts as something that take place in the scene of interpretation (Santiago, 1976).

society" it is possible to "justify homicide [and many other violences] every day in the international society" (Der Derian, 1989, p. 5).

Certainly, someone could argue that the U.S. "foreign policy" is heading to a different focus – at least since the Obama administration – for, as highlighted in the *Remarks by President Obama to the Australian Parliament,* "[a]fter a decade in which we fought two wars that cost us dearly, in blood and treasure, the United States is turning our attention to the vast potential of the Asia Pacific region." (White House, 2011, n. p.). Additionally, in November 2020, while still in office, then President Trump stated that "[t]he United States is taking action to protect our nation and its partners from an increasingly assertive China. We are no longer turning a blind eye to the People's Republic of China's conduct nor are we hiding our criticism of its Communist Party behind closed doors" (White House, 2020). Also, because, President Biden, in an article published in *Foreign Affairs*, and during his first Presidential campaign, stated that "The United States does need to get tough with China" (2020, n. p.). Also because, and as many influent IR theorists state, the U.S. "Pivot to Asia" foreign policy is where we should head our attention to – especially concerning "China's rise as a superpower."

Stephen Walt, for example, sees China as the greater potential menace to the prosperity and security of the United States – greater than the recent COVID-19 pandemic which killed more than 1,183,924 [21] people only in the USA (Walt, 2020 apud[22] Dario, 2020a; Worldometers, 2020). John Mearsheimmer, in turn, sees a real possibility of war between China and the USA or, at least, a security competition that would last decades (Mearsheimmer, 2020, apud Dario, 2020b). Robert Jervis, on the other hand, saw the U.S. foreign policy under Donald Trump's administration as a chaotic system which reflects the President's own chaotic personality, which could lead to more hostilities towards Western Europe and towards the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (Jervis, 2020, apud Dario, 2020c).

Also, one could argue that Donald Trump's administration attention was strongly directed to undoing everything that has been done by his predecessors –

[21] Unfortunately, every time I revisit this text, the numbers of COVID-19 deaths rise frighteningly. This way, the numbers presented here almost certainly will not remain the same in a few days.
[22] Walt, Mearsheimmer and Jervis were all interviewed by Leandro Dario in 2020. All interviews are referenced by the end of this dissertation.

i.e., reestablishing a relationship with North Korea, establishing a trade war with China, withdrawing Iran's nuclear deal, etc. (White House, 2018a; White House, 2018b; White House, 2018c). Likewise, according to Paulson (2023), under Biden's administration, the USA has been attempting to organize a coalition of European and Asian countries to pressure and counterbalance China. In so doing, the USA has been tightening up its control on the exportation of technologies as well as blocking Chinese investments especially because this administration views China's technological advancing not only as a competition problem, but as a national security issue.

I would argue back that, yes, the U.S. attention is deeply committed to all those aspects. But it does not mean it has stopped talking about/(re)producing "Wars on Terrors," even though this "proper name" might have changed a little over the last years: for example, the Obama administration dropped out the term "War on Terror" and chose to refer to its interventions as "overseas contingency operations" (Burkeman, 2009, n.p.); a "War Against *Al-Qaeda* and its allies" (Scahill, 2014, p. 331); or to "Countering Violent Extremisms" (Viana and Silva, 2020). Be that as it may, even though this *proper name* has changed, I would argue that an asymmetrical, counterconceptual iterable structure remains (Derrida, 1978; 1988; Koselleck, 2004; 2018).

To acknowledge that, it is important to understand that foreign policy is an important security practice in the USA. This practice is constantly reinforced through "conventional and dominant" political discourses preoccupied with combating "dangers" and "enemies" and objectifying "events" and "identities" of different "peoples" and (countries) – i.e., plural dangers, enemies, events, identities, peoples, and countries (Campbell, 1998). In this sense, I understand that the USA *persists* on re-*writing* (its) *security* (Campbell, 1998) because not only it is structured and performed as if something keeps *haunting* and *eluding* (its) *security*, but also because "(in)security,"[23] and "terrorism" keep *haunting* and *eluding* (its) "Wars on Terrors."

Consequently, arguing that "Wars on Terrors" persist does not mean I think "the War on Terror" has been the same "war" waged against the same "terror;" these terms have been mobilized as if they were the same though. Indeed, "Wars on

[23] I explore the idea of "security" throughout chapter 5. However, it is worth highlighting that when I resort to the term "(in)security" I suggest an aporia between security and insecurity.

Terrors" persist because Iraq and Afghanistan still feel the effects of *Operation Enduring Freedom* (2002) and *Operation Iraqi Liberation* (2003); because Guantánamo Bay detention center remains open (Jackson, 2011; Executive Order on Protecting America Through Lawful Detention of Terrorists, 2018; Amnesty International, 2023); because of the Muslim Ban of 2017 (Executive Order Protecting …, 2017); because Afghanistan was attacked by the "Mother of all Bombs," the most powerful nonnuclear bomb of the US arsenal (The New York Times, 2018); because, under the name of "National Security," Qasem Soleimani, a high official of Iran was assassinated, or, as the official documents say, was the object of a "targeted killing" (White House, 2020); because Trump called on "[…] all civilized nations to join us in seeking to end the slaughter and bloodshed in Syria" (White House, 2018d); because the Biden administration still identifies Syria, Yemen, and Somalia as "terrorist" sanctuaries; because the USA remains "[...] confident in [their] ability to maintain the fight against al-Qa'ida, ISIS and associated forces from over the horizon [...]" and promises that "as the threat evolves, so too must our counterterrorism approach" (National Security Strategy, 2022, p. 30); and so on. Also during the last few years, we have witnessed the consequences of the recent administrations propositions when we observed a backlash on "Muslim" populations, as former President Donald Trump retweeted anti-Muslim propaganda shared by ultra-nationalist groups, considered shutting down mosques in the USA, and used dubious data in order to promote a travel ban targeting Muslim-majority nations (CNN, 2020).

"Wars on Terrors" also persist because im/migrants, refugees and asylum seekers face detention, removals, returns and deportations; because small children are separated from their families and held in cages; because limits are ordered on foreign workers, and immigration restrictions have been imposed and extended not only by administrations like those of Donald Trump in 2020 – under an irresponsible and racist rhetoric on COVID-19 pandemics, which he called the "Kung flu" during a youth rally in Arizona (CNN, 2020) – but also under those administrations of George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Joseph Biden.

"Wars on Terrors" also persist because demands on racial, gender and social matters, like those of antifa, Black Lives Matter and Occupy are equated to the brutal, racist manifestations of white supremacists such as the Proud Boys, the Ku

Klux Klan and the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (Bray, 2017; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2023, n.p; Viana and Silva, 2021).

Within these – and countless other – examples, we can see how "strangers," "aliens," "outside(r)s" are still regarded in the U.S. as those with an essential dissymmetry (Balibar, 2017). In their "Compassionate Conservatism" and in the hope for "A Safer World and a More Hopeful America;" in saying that "Yes We Can!" and in going "Forward;" in "Making America Great Again!;" in trying to "Keep America Great!;" in promoting a "Battle for the Soul of the Nation" and promising to "Build Back Better,"[24] "*Wars on Terrors"* have been promoted and not only were/are "stranger, alien outside(r)s" experienced as different, s/he was/is also introduced to violent possibilities materialized in military interventions, in the construction of walls, in detentions, and in its combination with discourses, institutions, policies and technologies used order to "protect" the USA against "threats," "invasions" and, of course, "terrorism" – as if there were an original and legitimate identity and nation to be defended (Campbell, 1998).

That being the case, this dissertation provides "novelty" and contributes to the field of IR by re-reading the U.S. foreign policy regarding matters of "terrorism." In so doing, I pay attention to the same "old (hi)story" (Walker, 2018) – of enmity lines, violence, war, change, repetition – that encompasses not only the U.S. but the international[25], and consistently argue for making *unfamiliar* what we have considered naturally given. This way, as an IR researcher, I justify my engagement in analyzing the persistence of the "Wars on Terrors" by asserting the importance and relevance in scrutinizing matters of "security," "foreign policy," "terrorism," and "war."

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[24] Each pair of slogans belong to the last four Presidents of the USA: George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joseph Biden, respectively.

[25] As the reader may observe by reading this dissertation, on the one hand, I constantly attempt to resist the idea of well-bounded identities, lines, points and (hi)stories. However, and on the other hand, I had to resort to delimitations to make this work viable – such as that indicated in the title: USA, security, foreign policy, persistence, war, "terrorism," and 2021-2023. Opting to do so certainly made me leave a lot behind, for this "delimited" analysis pays special attention to the USA and its "Wars on Terrors." Nevertheless, throughout this work – and as I show in chapter 5 – I kept in mind that the persistence of "Wars on Terrors" and of its violences may be related and/or have as a condition of possibility a "constitutive outside" and "constitutive outsiders" of the "modern international." Put simply, my analysis is not only informed by an idea of a monolithic entity – the USA – which would be waging "Wars on Terrors;" rather, it is informed by the idea that multiple constitutive outside(r)s play a pivotal role in the U.S. foreign policy which is presented/presents itself as part of the normal, natural, acceptable "international."

Instead of taking "abstractions for granted" and missing "a very large part of what counts of politics […] among all those things that are going on" (Walker, 2018, p. 5), I suggest that not only should we question the way numerous acts of violence – such as "Wars on Terrors" – are undertaken, but also question, disrupt and resist the way these violences unceasingly resort to definitions of what the world "is," what/who the USA "is," what "terrorism is," what "security" is, who "is" welcome, and who "is not," and so on.

Also, I justify my engagement with this subject for, as Lidén (2019) puts it: *critical* security studies constantly question *prevailing presuppositions* in conventional/orthodox security studies. This way, I must highlight that this work is built with the help of "critical security studies," "poststructuralisms,"[26] deconstruction, and a Derridean chain of remittances, i.e., iterability, structural iterability, *différance*, the supplement, hauntology and so on. Guided by these theoretical approaches, this work contributes to invigorating international politics analysis[27].

It is pertinent to stress that my main goal is *not* to propose a new kind of orthodoxy to those who have been studying the U.S. "foreign policy" and/or the "War on Terror." Neither is my intention to simply condemn what has been done and analyzed so far. In contrast, I engage directly with issues and questions that have already been taken as the subject matter of "foreign policy" and "security studies" and bring fresh insights that pay attention to the entanglement of grammars, narratives, rhetoric, and material, powerful, violent practices. In so doing, I draw attention to radical intertextuality[28] and investigate/question scripting styles of international politics (Shapiro, 1989; Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams, 2015).

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[26] It is important to use the term "poststructuralism" carefully, for although it can be welcomed as a didactic tool to introduce us to a complex variety of writings, it is also a problematic label, since those who use it (to explain, to criticize or to defend it), reunite, under an eclectic and enormous umbrella, authors whose thoughts do not always converge, such as Félix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler and Michel Foucault – to name only a few (Gregory, 1989, p. xiii; Finlayson and Valentine, 2005). This way, I prefer to address it in the plural and between quotation marks, i.e., "poststructuralisms."

[27] All these ideas are properly presented throughout this whole dissertation, but especially in chapters 2 and 3 – where I pay attention to "poststructuralism," deconstruction and other Derridean contributions – and in chapter 5, where I explore the ideas of "security," "identity," "difference," "otherness," "inside," and "outside."

[28] As I show in chapter 2, section 2.4.1, in this dissertation I do not conceive the "linguistic" and the "material" as two different and separated realms. Rather, I think of a radical intertextuality, wherein language and materiality have a rhizomatic, spectral relationship which can be observed, negotiated, problematized through deconstructive lenses (Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams, 2015; Deleuze and Guattari, 2019; Derrida, 2016).

With these questions and *pre*-suppositions in mind, in the following chapters I am especially in debt to those insights of Jacques Derrida's and to Reinhart Koselleck's contributions – and, of course, to those critical thinkers and IR scholars that help me, with their writings, to work within the (de)sedimentation of political understandings (Ashley, 1987, 1988, 1989; Butler, 1993, 2004, 2016, 2018, 2019; Campbell, 1990, 1998; Walker, 1993, 2002, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2009, 2018; Dillon, 1996; Zehfuss, 2003, 2004, 2009, 2019 – to name only a few of them).

In this sense, it is also important to highlight that in order understand how these persistent "Wars on Terrors" keeps structuring the terms of the US foreign policy during the 21st century, I do not intend to *destroy* anything. Rather, in re-reading this persistent discourse, the idea is to de-*sediment* and dis-orient it. For although there is an insistent idea that "poststructuralists" deconstruct, but do not reconstruct[29], it is imperative to mention that deconstruction, at least in Derrida's writings, suggest an exercise of attentively reading, questioning, and overturning dichotomies and hierarchies, as well as an exercise of de-centering (the human subject, institutions, *logos*) (Royle, 2003; Zehfuss, 2009).

I must also highlight that I am not a "deconstructor" *per se*; rather, I pay attention to, and reflect upon, a deconstruction that is always already at work. In

[29] It is imperative to highlight here that part of those associated with "critical security studies" directed critique to those (problematically) reunited under the label of "poststructuralism." It is said that although "poststructuralists" provide some helpful insights – since their work defies categorizations taken for granted by being suspicious of Enlightenment's universalizing claims – "they" fail to engage productively with politics. Booth (2007) suggests that "poststructuralists" pretentiously talk about dealing with "the political." In this sense, "they" would allegedly be involved with philosophical stylishness and with the politics of the bystander rather than with political struggle (Booth, 2007). In the same way, "poststructuralisms" are considered by Booth (2007) as a mental irritant, rather than a road map towards community, emancipation, and security, for it "misses chunks of reality, and is based on the fallacy that threats do not exist outside discourse" (Booth, 2007, p. 165). Contrary to that, Booth claims that *threats do exist outside discourse*. "They clearly do so, empirically." (p. 165). Bilgin (2008) similarly points out that the aim of critical security studies is "[…] not only to deconstruct but also to reconstruct." (p. 96). Krause and Williams (1997), in turn, suggest that the deconstructive movement resists the desire to replace certainties it discredits and that it celebrates fragmentation and prizes difference over identity (p. xv). This way, for these authors, grand emancipatory narratives of solidarity can provide hope for victims – of patriarchal, colonial, and racist worlds. They argue that it is necessary to take a stand, to take a side and that "poststructuralists" do not do it convincingly. This way, it is clear that if we focus on the use of keywords such as "to deconstruct," "discourse," "textuality," "to take a stand" and "to replace," we can see that a caricature of "poststructuralisms" is designed. Be that as it may, I *disagree* with this image, mainly when considering works such as those of Ashley (1987, 1988, 1989); Edkins (1999; 2002); Closs Stephens and Vaughan-Williams (2009); Der Derian and Shapiro (1989); Campbell (1998); Zehfuss (2003; 2020); Vaughan-Williams (2005; 2009); Lundborg & Vaughan Williams (2014); Walker (2016); and the extensive contribution of Jacques Derrida's work. The input of these authors help us to render less obvious premises taken for granted; they encourage us to re-think what we have been believing in and stimulate us to be political thinkers.

this sense, rather than "deconstructing" the U.S. "Wars on Terrors," I draw attention to its dichotomies and hierarchies fragile structures that are already in the process of ruining, getting overturned and decentered, turning into some-*thing* different, ruining, getting overturned and decentered, again and again (and again). This way, it is important to say that although Derrida does not provide a univocal definition of deconstruction, his work shows that, apart from thinking about the force of the non-center, deconstruction is ceaseless and it "[…] involves a seismological attentiveness to the tiniest details" (Royle, 2003, p. 25).

Also, regarding the theoretical-methodological positions adopted in this dissertation, I follow Charlotte Epstein (2017), who showed in an interview to *E-International Relations*, how, during the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the possibility of problematizing the political through language, instead of achieving its full potential, was rapidly replaced by other approaches concerned with assemblages, the material, practices, etc. In this sense, as Epstein (2017) states, I believe that language should be more explored in IR, for we could learn a lot about what is going on by examining carefully what a culture, a government or a society talks about and considers to be "(ab)normal" or "(un)acceptable," since "discourses are a privileged site for apprehending these processes of social construction" and they "offer profound insights into the extent to which political identities are so fragile and unstable, yet so potent, in terms of determining courses of action" (Epstein, 2017, n. p.). Additionally, following Shapiro (1989), this research works with the notion that social realities are governed by meanings and imposed values that are not eternal or linear. These are pre-texts that form large text(s) – through reality-making scripts – that are presented as ready to hand/given data, but that, actually, are much more than that.

From this standpoint, here I invite the reader to mistrust forms of power and authority presented as natural, familiar and given. In other words, I propose we question privileged and neutralized forms of representation that insistently keep trying to standardize "subjects," "objects" (Shapiro, 1989) and abjects (Devetak, 2005), and try, but fail, to push beyond the limits of the international its multiple constitutive outside(r)s (Walker, 2006a, 2006b; 2009; Yamato, 2019, 2020).

This way, this dissertation is based on the theoretical support offered by the so-called "poststructuralist" approach, as well as on the methodology of Discourse Analysis (AD) (Der Derian and Shapiro, 1989; Milliken, 1999; Lundborg &

Vaughan-Williams, 2015). Working with these theoretical lenses means to be concerned with those propositions and/or impositions of interpretations that claim to encompass the whole "reality" (Der Derian and Shapiro, 1989, p. x). In this sense, contrary to what occurs in conventional approaches, "poststructuralist" lenses avoid universal and transcendental projects; rather, it seeks to undertake critical work in order to expose narrative arbitrariness and the rhizomatic relationship between practices, power, and knowledge in the political realm (Der Derian and Shapiro, 1989).

To that end, methodologically, this research was informed by IR works as well as on theorists that have long been thinking about what is and on how to do "Discourse Analysis" (Epstein, 2013; Lundborg & Vaughan-Williams, 2015; Shapiro, 1989; Shepherd and Weldes, 2008). In this sense, for the purposes of this research and in working with Discourse Analysis, I opted for the methodological device of performativity (Aradau, Coward, Herschinger, Thomas and Voelkner, 2015), to the commitment of the play of practice (Milliken, 1999) and to the deconstructive reading (Derrida, 1988; Rodrigues, 2018; Turner, 2016; Thoibisana, 2019). Also, in this research, I decided to explore a myriad of primary sources – available at U.S. government official websites –, as well as secondary sources – on the media in general, on human rights reports and on IR academic writings – that provide(d) and contest(ed) a persistent narrative that keeps structuring the terms of the US foreign policy and its "Wars on Terrors" during the 21st century (2001-2023).

This way, this dissertation came to life with the help of the deconstruction of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" *textiles*. However, once again I must highlight that this work does not rely upon deconstruction as a method, but on deconstruction as an intervention, as a way of reading and drawing attention to something that is already at play. A reading that can happen through a *double strategy*, that of "overturning" and "de-centering" (Derrida, 1988; Rodrigues, 2018). In other words, this dissertation comes to life because the deconstructive move towards (or of) the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" textiles represents a reading to which I add something[30].

It is important to acknowledge that even though I opt to pay special attention to primary sources – such as National Security Strategies, Executive Orders, State

[30] According to Silviano Santiago (1976, p. 54), a Derrida reader, the text is something to which our reading adds something.

of the Union Addresses, FBI Law Enforcement Bulletins, Presidential Acts and so forth – I conceive these "discourses" as rhizomatic, contaminated, and disseminated tissues, that is, as *textiles.* In other words, I understand that

> discourses are sites of social power. Some discourses are powerful because they are located in powerful institutions. [Also,] representations by state officials have *prima facie* plausibility as these officials are constituted as speaking for the state, and ultimately for "us." Such representations are regarded as legitimate not because they are accurate, but because they emanate from the institutional power matrix that is the state. In their representations of in/security, for example, state officials can claim access to information produced by the state and denied to most outsiders. They also have privileged access to the media to disseminate their representations […] And, crucially, their representations have constitutional legitimacy, especially in the construction of insecurity. After all, "national security" is quintessentially the business of the state, and the identification of insecurities is a task understood rightly to belong to its officials […]. Dominant discourses, especially those of the state, thus become and remain dominant in part because of the power relations sustaining them (Shepherd and Weldes, 2008, p. 534).

This way, the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" *textiles* are conceived here as those which grammars, rhetoric, material practices are entangled and cannot be unwoven and separated as "material" and "non-material;" which do not suffice in themselves; and that are constantly susceptible to implosion and to the arrival of the "outside(r)" (Campbell, 1998; Derrida, 1981; Arfi, 2012; Lundborg and Vaughan Williams, 2015; Deleuze and Guattari, 2019). This way, not only do I read texts – in the common conception of the word – I also draw attention to the how they affect bodies, minds and territories of the international.

It is also important to posit that structuring this dissertation as well as its goals would not be possible without choices, that is, moments in which I had to violently decide what would be presented and what would be left out. As Said (2006, p. 16) reminds us "[t]here is no such thing as a merely given, or simply available, starting point […] The idea of beginning, indeed the act of beginning, necessarily involves an act of delimitation by which something is cut out of a great mass of material."

Certainly, these decisions were not rational calculations free from any kind of risk. Rather, as Kierkegaard says, "the instant of decision is madness" (apud Derrida, 1992). This way, all the steps that I follow, as well as those I do not follow in this dissertation, are my own responsibility. Be that as it may, "[…] since there is no [rational], determined, correct, true starting point" (Haddock-Lobo, 2011, 28,

my translation)[31], I could only elaborate on what I did and what I tried to answer in my doctoral dissertation.

Therefore, I divided this work into six chapters. Chapter 1, (this) *Introduction*, consists of both a presentation and an invitation to the development of my research. Within this chapter I introduce and present my research problem, along with its respective delimitations. I also provide a concise overview of my theoretical-methodological approach. Furthermore, I present and briefly comment on my thesis, emphasizing its twofold argument, originality, and contribution to the field of IR. Finally, as it is done at this moment, I present and briefly comment on this work outline.

Then, I present Chapter 2, titled *(Un)becoming "Terror."* This chapter pays attention to a name which holds a valuable position in this dissertation: "terrorism." In this chapter, I take 4 steps. First, I explore debates on "terrorism" and analyze how this name eludes a closed definition. Second, I suggest that the elusiveness of "terrorism" – i.e., its (un)becoming quality – allows for violent long-term consequences in many bodies, lives and places. After that, and thirdly, I narrow down my focus to the U.S. endeavors against "terrorism" during the 21st century. Finally, I show how deconstruction, iterability, *différance*, supplementarity, asymmetric counterconcepts and structural iterability help us to understand how "terrorism" both keeps being pointed out as a *problem* against which the USA "must" be defended, and persistently eludes the U.S. "foreign policy" concerns.

Then, I present Chapter 3, titled *Haunting Security*. In this chapter, I argue that we *must* be suspicious of U.S. discourses towards terror, for it is through iterability, through the endless play of traces, that "Wars on Terrors" re-appear, are re-configured, re-instituted, perceived, remembered, thought of, accepted, rejected, discussed, archived, etc., in their supposed "reality" –"truth," "being," "presence". In this sense, first I explore the ideas of the "ontic," the "ontological" and the "hauntological" in order to show that not only are we surrounded by the illusion of permanent (ontic-ontological) presence, but also that we must (and can) be attentive to its dangers. Second, I expand my analysis and look for the *traces* of some of the U.S. endeavors against "terrorism" that take place *before* September 11, 2001; more specifically, I look at the 1980s and the 1990s – during which Ronald Reagan

[31] In the original: "E, não havendo ponto de partida determinado, correto, verdadeiro, pode-se começar de onde se quiser" (Haddock-Lobo, 2011, p. 28)

(1981-1989), George H. Bush (1989-1993), and William (Bill) Clinton's (1993-2001) administrations take place. After that, and third, I follow the theoretical-empirical-conceptual tools presented in the previous sections in order to think *hauntologically* about "terrorism" in the USA. I do so with the help of official documents available at U.S. official websites, such as the National Security Strategies as well as the Law Enforcement Bulletins, published by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Finally, I present some reflections that emerged in writing this chapter as well as the next steps I take.

In Chapter 4, *Waging "Wars on Terrors",* I argue that being hauntological facilitates the ontico-ontological instantiation of "terrorism" and its "perpetrators." Consequently, "terrorists" are provisionally assigned names, faces, characteristics, typical behaviors. "They" are portrayed as dressing a certain way, congregating in specific places, having particular skin colors, and conforming differently to specific gender norms… until "they" acquire different names, faces, places, skin colors again and again. This way, in this chapter I show what I mean when I say "terrorists" are de-faced and de-territorialized: who "they are;" what "they" look like; what "they" think; what/who "they" fight for is only provisionally identified – all is constantly and ceaselessly changing. In this sense, first, I briefly explore what I mean when I invoke the word "war" and I explain why I choose to talk about "Wars on Terrors." Then, I analyse (only) three images of "terrorism," those being: the portrayal of "Muslims, Arabs and Middle-Easterners as essentially terrorists;" the depiction of "Im/migrants and refugees as terrorists in the making;" and the classification of "antifa and white supremacists as domestic terrorists." Finally, I propose that those labeled as "terrorists" are constitutive outside(r)s of the inter/national – an idea further developed in Chapter 5. This way, the last section of this chapter consists of an invitation to Chapter 5, where I finally weave together the textiles unraveled in this dissertation and illustrate how "terrorisms" elude U.S. security and how "security" is, itself, elusive.

In Chapter 5, *Eluding Security,* I come back to two ideas entertained in the title of this dissertation, those of "elusiveness" and "security." To do so, I re-invoke analysis and suggestions I unraveled in previous chapters – regarding "terrorism," foreign policy, war, persistence, iterability, *différance*, supplementarity, hauntology and, of course, deconstruction. After that, I provisionally weave them together – as they are constantly on the move. This way, first, I explore the idea of "security" and

how it is constantly invoked in the U.S. *textiles* as a mantra, a no-brainer, a ready-to hand watchword that attempts to justify any measures to combat or avoid "terrorism." Then, I suggest that multiple "constitutive outsides" (Walker, 2006) and "constitutive outsiders" (Yamato, 2019) – as being an integral part of the modern international – are also meaningful to justify the existence of "Wars on Terrors" in the USA. Finally, I revisit how (structural) iterability, asymmetrical counterconcepts, *différance* and hauntology go hand in hand with the elusiveness of "security" and, therefore, the elusiveness of "terrorism."

Finally, in Chapter 6, *Final Remarks*, I reflect upon the *textiles* that have been unweaved and provisionally woven together throughout this dissertation. In so doing, I suggest that ontico-ontological instantiations of "terrorism" and "terrorists"– that involve a performativity that constitute supposed identities – allow for multiple constitutive roles, that of constitutive outside(r)s of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors." More than that, I insist upon both the impossibility of closure – of this dissertation and of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" – and the importante of unceasingly attempting to shake apparently well built, tenacious grounds[32].

Before moving on to the next chapter, I suggest the reader keep in mind that the deconstructive reading that takes place in this dissertation acknowledges that no assumption, claim or principle is taken as given or unproblematic, no matter how honorable it may look or sound. This way, the point here is *not* being "down to earth" because, regarding the U.S. "Wars on Terrors," we might only realize that their grounds are not and will never be secure (Marchart, 2007; Suganami, 1996; Van Milders, 2012).

[32] It is possible to observe that the outlined structure diverges from conventional models, which typically involves presenting theoretical and conceptual frameworks before delving into analysis and critique. If I were to do so, the reader would face a lengthy first part focused on Jacques Derrida and Reinhart Koselleck; on "foreign policy;" on "security studies;" on "identity and difference;" on approaches to "terrorism" and so on. And only after this vast theoretical-conceptual presentation, would I be able to analyse the subject(s) of this study. Nonetheless, I consider that all aspects invoked and evoked throughout this dissertation are intimately entangled. Therefore, theory, examples and critique go hand in hand and, from time to time, I resort to them altogether to make sense of the broader thesis proposed here. This way, this departure from a rigid format is aimed at promoting a more seamless flow throughout the following pages.

2
(Un)becoming “Terrorism”

2.1
Introduction

> The function of the center was not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure – one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure – but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the *play* of the structure. By orienting and organizing the coherence of the system, the center of a structure permits the play of its elements inside the total form. And even today the notion of a structure lacking any center represents the unthinkable itself.
>
> Jacques Derrida (1978, p. 278-279)

Discourses on war and violence hold significance in both IR and Political Science (Newman, 2004). However, these discussions predominantly adopt a state-centric perspective. For instance, numerous studies on the “War on Terror” often center around narratives of conflict between the USA and the Axis of Evil (Bijos, 2009; Blix, 2004), geopolitical struggles for natural resources and strategic positions (Lopes, 2009), and cultural clashes between the West and the East (Laipson, 2003; Lewis, 2003) – to name a few.

These discussions frequently reaffirm and seek to legitimize closed, state-centric, and strategic boundaries. Nevertheless, over recent decades, scholars have endeavored to diversify our understanding of international politics (see: Ashley, 1987, 1988, 1989; Ashley and Walker, 1990; Campbell, 1990, 1998; Der Derian & Shapiro, 1989; Edkins, 1999; Epstein, 2013, 2017; Owens, 2010; Vaughan-Williams, 2009a, 2009b; Walker, 1993, 2006a, 2006b; Wilcox, 2015; Zehfuss, 2003, 2009, 2019).

For instance, Shapiro (1997) argues that rather than merely focusing on how boundaries are enforced, defended, or crossed in war and security studies, it is valuable to explore how practices construct identity and space. He suggests paying attention to historical contexts in which self-alterity relationships are shaped and enacted (p. 31).

As I already highlighted, I follow the idea that concepts, (hi)stories and values are not eternal or linear (Shapiro, 1989). Or, while finding inspiration on Derrida's *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences* (1978), I understand that in the U.S. foreign policy the idea of waging wars against "terrorism" and defending its population and its values from "terrorism" resorts to a "center" that *orients, balances and organizes* a structure that keeps being re-*played* over the years.

The USA has not stopped talking about / re-producing the "War on Terror," or, as I prefer to put it, it has not stopped re-producing "Wars on Terrors." Yes, this "proper name" has changed a little over the last years: "War on Drugs"[33] → "War on Terror"[34] → "Overseas contingency operations"[35] → "War Against Al-Qaeda, the Taliban and its allies"[36] → "Protecting America Through Lawful Detention of Terrorists"[37] → "Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into The United States"[38] → "Countering Domestic Terrorism,"[39] etc. However, I would argue that the U.S. foreign policy is an important security practice (Campbell,

[33] "Now, I'd like to turn to another subject: the war on drugs. I want all Americans to take heart. This war is not yet won, not by a long shot. But we're doing better, and our nation is united against this scourge as never before" (Reagan, 1988, n.p.).

[34] "[…] the American people must understand this war on terrorism will be fought on a variety of fronts, in different ways. The frontlines will look different from the wars of the past. So I told the American people we will direct every resource at our command to win the war against terrorists, every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence. We will starve the terrorists of funding, turn them against each other, rout them out of their safe hiding places, and bring them to justice." (Bush, 2001a, n.p.)

[35] "[…] cutting off funding in the middle of the year introduces a dangerous level of uncertainty for our men and women in uniform carrying out missions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere. Our troops need and deserve guaranteed, predictable support as they execute their missions year round, particularly in light of the dangers they face in executing the country's ongoing overseas contingency operations." (Obama, 2016, n.p.)

[36] "[…] we must define our effort not as a boundless "global war on terror," but rather as a series of persistent, targeted efforts to dismantle specific networks of violent extremists that threaten America […] the United States is at war with al Qaeda, the Taliban, and their associated forces." (Obama, 2013, n.p.)

[37] "[...] operations are continuing given that a number of the remaining individuals at the detention facility are being prosecuted in military commissions, while others must be detained to protect against continuing, significant threats to the security of the United States, as determined by periodic reviews." (Federal Register, 2018, n.p.)

[38] "DHS and DOJ play a vital role in protecting the national security of the United States, especially against terror threats. DHS actively works to block known or suspected terrorists from entering the United States and is also focused on combating terrorist radicalization and recruitment in U.S. communities. DOJ is committed to the continued investigation and criminal prosecution of terrorists and other malicious actors, as well as criminal and civil denaturalization of U.S. citizens who derive their citizenship through naturalization fraud" (Department of Homeland Security, 2018, n.p.).

[39] "This National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism provides an overarching approach to address today's manifestation of the domestic terrorism threat as well as the evolving forms that the threat may take in the years ahead" (NSCDT, 2021, p. 6).

1998), and a boundary-producing-political-performance (Ashley, 1987), constantly reinforced through "conventional and dominant" political discourses preoccupied with combating *dangers* and *enemies* and objectifying *events* and *identities* of different *peoples* and *countries* (Campbell, 1998). In this sense, I understand that the USA keeps re-*writing* (its) *security* because it is structured as if something (i.e., the end of "terrorism") keeps *haunting* and *eluding* (its) *security.*

In the same vein, I recognize that these "Wars on Terrors" are always in the *process of becoming*. This way, in order to disorient the idea that "the War on Terror" is a chapter already overcome in the USA, and also in order to illustrate how it persists, my aim at this chapter is to assemble a review of [quasi-]concepts, ideas and contributions that will help me in the effort proposed by this dissertation.

To do so, first, in section 2.2, I explore a word that is valuable to this work, that is, "terrorism," and how it eludes a closed definition. Second, in section 2.3, I narrow down my focus to the U.S. endeavors against "terrorism" during the 21st century. Third, in section 2.4, I show how through a "poststructural" gaze and the help of Jacques Derrida and Reinhart Koselleck – through the ideas of deconstruction, iterability, *différance*, asymmetric counterconcepts and structural iterability – it is possible to understand how "terrorism" persistently eludes U.S. security concerns and keeps being pointed out as a *problem* against which its society must be defended (Foucault, 2019). Finally, in section 2.5, I present some reflections that emerged in writing this chapter as well as the next steps I take.

2.2
"Terrorism"

> There is more than one of them, there must be more than one of them.
>
> Jaques Derrida (2006, p. 14).

What is "terrorism?" Much like "democracy," "justice," "freedom," "communism," "fascism," "feminism," "anarchy," "ethics," "war," "security" and many other names, "terrorism" has entered and remained persistently in our political vocabulary. However, words alone do not take our understanding too far

and, as a result, there are numerous discussions regarding the lack of more precise, concrete, and explanatory definitions (Bonditti, 2014; Diniz, 2002; Laqueur, 2003; Shanahan, 2016; Stampnitzky, 2013; Whittaker, 2005).

If we try to reflect on this impasse, several questions regarding the (possibility of a) definition and nature of "terrorism" come to mind. And we could ask, then, why does this happen? I assume that with the acceleration of information sharing, on TV and on the internet, most of us believe we have a vague idea or impression of what "terrorism" *is*. No matter how vague this idea might be, most of us appear to be certain about what we are talking about. Also, lots of us, eager to communicate a complex message as quickly as possible, label a range of acts – especially violent acts – as *acts of* "*terrorism.*"

If we read a newspaper, watch the news, scroll down our Instagram, Twitter or Tik Tok feeds, or if we read academic books often recommended in IR and Political Science classes, we can easily find accounts about this matter. Building explosions, such as "Oklahoma City Bombing," in 1995 (FBI, 2021); historical accounts on the assassination of high-profile politicians, such as Frantz Ferdinand (van den Berge, 2014); reports on civilians slaughtered by militant units, such as those 31 civilians that have been killed in central Mali in December, 4th 2021 (BBC, 2021); the poisoning of supermarket products, such as the "Strawberry contamination scare" in Australia, in 2018 (Cohen and Lewis, 2018): all of them are described as "terrorism."

More than that, acts of violence involving anti-government/ anti-establishment dissidents, governments themselves, organized crime syndicates, the activity of common criminals, riots, demonstrations made by people engaged in any kind of militancy, the actions of individual psychopaths and many other manifestations are also often labeled "terrorism." In this sense, and as Diniz (2002, p. 2) puts it, "[o]ne of the problems of thinking about the phenomenon of terrorism is precisely the absence of uncontroversial definitions" [40].

According to Walter Laqueur (2003), the concern with "terrorism" has been on the international agenda for a long time, but it did not occupy, until the beginning of the 21st century, a prominent place. In this sense, after the September 11, 2001

[40] In the original: "Um dos problemas para se pensar o fenômeno do terrorismo é exatamente a ausência de definições incontroversas" (Diniz, 20002, p. 2).

attacks in the USA, it appears that "terrorism" became a priority concern, for it was considered an "existential threat" (Wolfendale, 2016).

If we look specifically at the USA – which will be done in more detail in section 2.3 – we can see deliberations about "terrorism," at the highest levels of government, that allowed for the creation of specialized institutions – such as the Homeland Security, in 2002, – and the issuing of resolutions and documents – such as the PATRIOT Act of 2001 and the National Security Strategies of 2002, 2006, 2010, 2015, 2017 and 2022 –, to name only a few.

Indeed, as we may acknowledge in the following pages, "terrorism" is not a *new concern* to the U.S. security agenda. Nonetheless, in the 21st century, it became some-*thing* that has been attracting intense and controversial debates not only among academics and politicians, but also among media analysts, and people in general (Lutz, 2014).

Due to this challenging scenario, there are numerous debates that attempt to provide a stable definition of "terrorism." Many of these debates are concerned with the question I posed at the beginning of this section, namely, "What is 'terrorism'?" There are also debates that ponder "Who is a terrorist?" and "How do 'we' suppress them, fight them, and eliminate them?" Nevertheless, these endeavors for purification have been persistently opposed (Stampnitzky, 2016, p. 57).

Defining "terrorism" and "terrorists" is neither an easy nor an objective task (Hanhimäki and Blumenau, 2013; Jackson, 2011, 2016; Kiras, 2013; Shanahan, 2016; Wolfendale, 2016). Why? Because part of the literature –and I follow this view – sees the notion of "terrorism" as unstable, fluid, and manipulable, i.e., as subjective (Stampnitzky, 2013; Wolfendale, 2016; Heath-Kelly, 2016). Consequently, addressing and dealing with "-*isms*" – such as "terror*ism*"– or "-*ists*" – such as "terror*ists*" – involves navigating through political evaluations and subjective interpretations.

Another crucial aspect to consider is that contemporary instances of what has come to be labeled as "terrorism" – by governments, the media, and scholars – indicate a departure from traditional concepts such as "limited combat areas," "battlefields," and "neutral territory" (Hanhimäki and Blumenau, 2013). This way, not only are conventional Western political categories rendered inapplicable, but ongoing developments consistently challenge and unsettle our understanding of what "terrorism" entails, fostering discomfort and uncertainty.

What course of action should we pursue then? Should we halt our efforts or surrender to this complexity? I believe not. In this dissertation, I contend that there is merit in examining competing definitions of "terrorism" and exploring how authors and institutions strive to comprehend it or counteract it. Especially because, as the reader will acknowledge throughout this work, waging wars against the *persistent, haunting, eluding* specter of "terrorism" implies resorting to "existential threat" and to "righteousness" narratives which have played a pivotal role in "legitimizing political, legal, military, and academic responses to terrorism" and have had "serious long-term consequences on the lives and wellbeing of thousands of individuals and communities" (Wolfendale, 2016, p. 249). This way, since I chose to persist in this endeavor, I echo Montaigne (apud Derrida, 1978, p. 279), and sustain that "[w]e need to interpret interpretations more than to interpret things."

I already have had several opportunities to reflect upon the idea of "terrorism," as I was invited to address undergraduate students in IR. And, as I emphasized in those opportunities, – mainly thanks to students interrogations – it is important to start this endeavor with a simple, but important assumption: that definitions of "terrorism" have changed over time. Having that in mind, it is imperative to understand two things: first, that we need to pay attention to its trajectory – even if it proves to be non-linear, rhizomatic, and not easily discernible; and second, that there exists no systematic and authoritative guide to "terrorism," although there are ongoing endeavors attempting to construct one[41].

Moreover, my approach involves considering not a singular "terrorism" but rather a spectral structure referred to as "terrorism." This structure possesses a center devoid of a natural locus, constantly being re-fulfilled and re-signified (Derrida, 1978). It embodies a specter-to-come that lingers, haunting (Derrida, 2006) and eluding U.S. foreign policy[42].

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[41] Some examples are mentioned in the next pages, but the reader could also visit, for example: UNODC. 2009. Manual on International Cooperation in Criminal Matters related to Terrorism. United Nations. Available at: <https://www.unodc.org/documents/terrorism/Publications/Manual_Int_Coop_Criminal_Matters/English.pdf>; U.S. Department of Justice. 1984. US Army Counterterrorism Manual. Office of Justice Programs. 198 pages. Available at: <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/us-army-counterterrorism-manual>; and OAS. 2002. Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism. Department of International Law. Available at: <https://www.oas.org/juridico/english/sigs/a-66.html>.

[42] This idea is further developed in Chapter 3, section 3.2.

As I emphasized earlier, in adhering to this notion of "terrorism" I understand that it benefits from images of "faceless" and "de-territorialized" strange, foreign, alien, outside(r) enemies whose faces, bodies and locations are only provisionally identified; from the impossibility to define what "terror" and "terrorists" mean and are; and from the entanglement of these "signifiers," over the course of the U.S. history, with those of "Indigenous Peoples," the "Black enslaved population," the "poor white servants (Irish, Scottish, Germans)," "Suffragist women," "Latin immigrants," "drugs dealers," "Muslims,"[43] "Arabs," "immigrants," "antifa," and so forth (Said, 2007; Zinn, 2015). Allow me to provide further elaboration on this matter.

When we try to understand the meaning of a keyword, generally we first look up for it in a dictionary – at least I do (see Chapter 1). And, because Portuguese is my first language, I first turned to the Online [Brazilian] Portuguese Dictionary. Regarding the meaning of "terrorism" it offers, we find the following entries:

> *Terrorismo*
> Maneira de estabelecer uma vontade através do uso contínuo do terror.
> Utilização organizada e metódica da violência com propósitos políticos, normalmente por meio de atentados, buscando desorganizar a sociedade vigente.
> Intimidação feita pelo uso da violência buscando amedrontar um povo ou governo, normalmente, baseando-se em questões ideológicas ou políticas.
> [Figurado] Regime político que se pauta em ações de violência.
> [Figurado] Comportamento intolerante e ameaçador usado por quem defende uma ideologia, em relação aos que não concordam com suas ideais, geralmente efetivado através da coerção ou da intimidação. Etimologia: a palavra terrorismo deriva da junção da palavra terror, do latim terror, *oris*, como o sentido de "pavor imenso, terror, pânico" + ism (Dicio, 2020).

That could be translated to English as follows:

> A way to establish a will through continuous use of terror.
> Organized and methodical use of violence for political purposes, usually through attacks, seeking to disrupt the current society.
> Intimidation through the use of violence seeking to frighten a people or government, usually based on ideological or political issues.
> [Figurative] Political regime based on acts of violence.
> [Figurative] Intolerant and threatening behavior used by those who defend an ideology, towards those who do not agree with their ideals, usually carried out

[43] Joseph Nye Jr. (2002), in a famous book that is largely read and reproduced by students of International Relations, *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's only Superpower can't go it alone*, says that the USA, "[a]s the largest power in the world, […] excites both longing and hatred among some, particularly in the Muslim world" (p. x).

> through coercion or intimidation. Etymology: the word terrorism derives from the combination of the word terror, from the Latin terror, *oris*, as the meaning of 'immense dread, terror, panic' + ism (Dicio, 2020, my translation).

I also looked for the meaning of "terrorism" in the Oxford Learner's Dictionary, for I am writing in English. This dictionary states that "terrorism" means "the use of violent action in order to achieve political aims or to force a government to act" (2021, n. p.). After coming across these definitions, I decided to go after other approaches. In so doing, I turned my attention to platforms dedicated to the matter of "terrorism" and to definitions provided by authors whose contribution to the field of *Terrorism Studies* and *Critical Terrorism Studies* (CTS) are well-known.

David Whittaker (2005, p. 21), for example, says that "[t]errorism, in the most widely accepted contemporary usage of the term, is fundamentally and inherently political. And it is inextricably linked to power: seeking, conquering, and using power for political change." James D. Kiras (2013), in turn, understands "terrorism" as "[...] the sustained use of violence against symbolic or civilian targets by small groups for political purposes, such as inspiring fear, drawing wide-spread attention to a political grievance, and / or provoking a draconian or unsustainable response." (p. 175).

I also visited the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) website, and came across the following definitions regarding "terrorism:"

> International terrorism: Violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and / or groups who are inspired by, or associated with, designated foreign terrorist organizations or nations (state-sponsored).
>
> Domestic terrorism: Violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature.
> […]
>
> The FBI is committed to remaining agile in its approach to the terrorism threat, which has continued to evolve since the September 11, 2001 terror attacks. Years after these attacks, the threat landscape has expanded considerably, and international terrorism remains a serious threat. The threat of domestic terrorism also remains persistent overall, with actors crossing the line from exercising First Amendment-protected rights to committing crimes in furtherance of violent agendas (FBI, 2022, n.p.).

Another interesting source I came across was the *Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism* (GIFCT, 2023)[44], which provides a map that intends to reunite twenty elements used to define "terrorism" and "violent extremism" around the globe, those being: act of violence; threat of violence; criminal act; state of fear/terror; support for ideological cause; coercion/intimidation; against public/society/innocent civilians; against government/political structures; against infrastructure; against economic structures; against social cohesion; against constitutional values; against national identity; non-state group or individual; demands made of third parties; purposeful/premeditated; repetitive/continuous; symbolic nature; radicalization mentioned; recruitment mentioned. This map[45] illustrates which of these elements are included in each of the 60[46] countries and five intergovernmental bodies/conventions[47] in their data.

Following the U.S. Code, Title 18, Part I, Chapter 113B "Terrorism," § 2331 "Definitions"[48], the GIFCT (2023) identifies that the U.S. definition of "terrorism" includes, on the one hand, the elements of act of violence, criminal act; coercion / intimidation; against public / society / innocent civilians; against government / political structures; non-state group or individual; and demands made of third parties. On the other hand, it excludes the elements of threat of violence, state of fear/ terror; support for ideological cause; against infrastructure; against economic structures; against social cohesion; against constitutional values; against national identity; purposeful/premeditated; repetitive/continuous; symbolic nature; radicalization mentioned; and recruitment mentioned.

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[44]The GIFCT is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that reunites academia, civil society, governments, and the technology industry in order to bring together information-sharing to counter "terrorism" and "violent extremism" activities online. To see more of its content, visit <https://gifct.org/>. Accessed on August 10, 2023.

[45] To see the map and to examine all the details, see: <https://def-frameworks.gifct.org/global-definitions-of-terrorism/> Accessed on August 10, 2023.

[46] Albania, Algeria, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, France, Ghana, Hungary, India, Iraq, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kingdom of Jordan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malawi, Maldives, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Portugal, Republic of North Macedonia, Russia, Serbia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Zambia.

[47] Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); European Union (EU); Interamerican Convention; and Organization of African Union (OAU).

[48] To verify and examine the complete US Code definitions regarding "Terrorism" visit <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/2331>. Accessed on August 10, 2023.

According to the preceding definitions, "terrorism" is either a "domestic" or an "international" manifestation of violence – or, equally important, an evolving *threat* of inter/national violence – used and directed in pursuit of a political objective or in its service that targets, harms and/or intimidates peoples and/or governments and/or symbolic places. In this sense, violence, harm, threats, randomness, terror, fear, intimidation, psychological coercion, political motivation, unlawful violence by non-state actors, civilians, non-combatants, innocents, and morally wrong issues seem to be keywords constantly associated with what "terrorism" could be (Shanahan, 2016).

Regarding the multiplicity of definitions of "terrorism," Richard Jackson (2016, p. 21-22), a well-known reference of CTS, highlights the importance of

> […] opening up, and in other cases widening and deepening, key debates in the field about the nature and definition of terrorism, the use of the "terrorist" label and the language of terrorism, the terrorism taboo and the need for more primary research, the silence on state terrorism, the exaggeration of the terrorism threat, the evaluation of counter-terrorism and the war on terror, the normative dimension of terrorism research, the gendered aspect of terrorism research, and other key issues […]

In a similar vein, we can observe that there are those who argue that in its contemporary usage, "[…] this term legitimates state power and delegitimates the use of force by non-state actors. It assumes in advance that 'terrorist' acts are always illegitimate and unjustified." (Barkawi and Laffey, 2006, p. 332). In this sense, what is considered a "terrorism" act, could be understood, by some, as a response to injustice, and "terrorists" could be considered, by some, those who have been driven to take drastic actions due to intolerable conditions, such as poverty, hunger, political and social oppression, and lack of hope regarding their future.

Following this rationale, many of those considered "terrorists" wrap themselves in the veil of military terminology: they portray themselves as those acting in good faith, if not soldiers, who, while not wearing military uniforms or badges, should receive the same treatment as prisoners of war if captured, and, therefore, should not be tried as common criminals in public courts. Given their inferiority in numbers and limited firepower, they argue that they have no option but to go underground, emerging from the shadows to commit dramatic acts of violence.

It is also important to note that those – whether scholars, analysts, media commentators or policy makers – who have ready and quick explanations about what "terrorism" is or why it exists, hardly ever give up on their position (Stampnitzky, 2016). However, it is important that we keep in mind that, since "terrorism" is an extremely fluid and unstable phenomenon/name, we cannot remain comfortable with ready to hand explanations. On the contrary, we need to be aware of new violent manifestations on the inter/national scene and the way they are classified –in academic texts, in political pronouncements, in texts circulating in the big media, etc.) – i.e., interpret interpretations more than we interpret things (Derrida, 1978).

With regard to more recent productions (Bonditti, 2014; Jackson, 2011, 2016; Kiras, 2013; Shanahan, 2016; Stampnitzky, 2013, 2016; Wolfendale, 2016), there seems to be some agreement that what is conceived as "terrorism" is inescapably political in its aims and motives; violent, or equally important, threatens violence; designed to cause psychological repercussions that transcend the victim or immediate target; conducted by an organization with an identifiable chain of command or a conspiratorial cell structure (whose members do not wear uniforms or identifying badges); and perpetrated by a subnational group, a non-state entity, or by a state.

Also, not only do dictionaries, media-related productions and academic writers have been trying to define "terrorism," but there were also institutional attempts to define it. Besides the aforementioned FBI definition, we could go way back to a significant attempt to define "terrorism" as an international crime. It was carried out by the League of Nations between the years of 1934 and 1937, through the *Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism*.

This attempt did not succeed, though, for only one (colonial) country has ratified it: India (Saul, 2006, p. 79). Besides the obvious factor, the dissolution of the League of Nations in 1946, the Convention was not fully ratified and implemented due to a simple obstacle: the states involved in the negotiations did not reach an agreement on what could be considered a "terrorist act" (Saul, 2006).

There have been other attempts undertaken by the United Nations (UN) and its agencies. The UN General Assembly (UNGA) *Resolution 49/60*, for example, intends to criminalize armed activities and to label them as "terrorism," for it understands them as

> [A]cts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them (United Nations, 1994, Resolution 49/60, Paragraph 3).

Also, in 1996, negotiations for a *Global Convention on International Terrorism* began, but so far it has been impeded by stalemates among the negotiating actors (United Nations, 2018). Once again, no agreement was reached on a clear definition of what "terrorism" is, for many countries seek to differentiate "terrorism" and "armed resistance" – in which resistance is understood as a way of avoiding foreign occupation[49].

This prompts consideration of a well-known and frequently quoted phrase: "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" (Hanhimäki and Blumenau, 2013, p. 5)[50] – i.e., what is considered "terrorism" by some countries means "resistance" for others. This scenario is considered problematic by institutions such as the UN and for some countries – such as El Salvador, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, and Mexico – that express that they *need* a closed definition of "terrorism," because, for them, if there is no common and global definition, there is also no possibility of opposing "terrorist" violence (Shanahan, 2016).

It is also important to bear in mind that, in this complex and tortuous scenario, thinking about "terrorism" did not always imply associating it with "Arabs," "Muslims," *al-Qaeda* or the Islamic State. Nor did it presuppose an exclusive framework regarding the period *after* the September 11th, 2001 attacks. In this

[49] This affirmation was illustrated during the General Assembly 73rd meeting, on October 3rd, 2018. In this meeting "ALI NASIMFAR (Iran), speaking for the Non-Aligned Movement, unequivocally condemned, and rejected terrorism in all its forms. […] he underscored that terrorism should not be equated with the legitimate struggles of people under colonial or alien domination and foreign occupation for self-determination and national liberation. The brutalization of peoples remaining under foreign occupation should continue to be denounced as the gravest form of terrorism and the use of State power for the suppression of these people should continue to be condemned. Furthermore, terrorism should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization, or ethnic group, nor should these attributions be used to justify terrorism or counter-terrorism measures that include profiling of terror suspects and intrusion on individual privacy." (United Nations, 2018, n.p.).

[50] It is crucial to emphasize that the reference to Hanhimäki and Blumenau (2013) is solely provided here as an illustration from an academic book where the phrase has been cited. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that this particular expression is commonly regarded as a *cliché* among those who study "terrorism" and that, so far, I have not been able to find out if it has an "original" source.

sense, it is also difficult to define "terrorism" because this term has changed so much over the years – especially over the last 200 years (Rapoport, 2013).

According to the dominant literature, the use of the word "terrorism" can be traced back to the French Revolution, in the so-called *Reign of Terror* (1793-1794) – during the command of Robespierre and the Jacobins. During this period, the implementation of "terror" was aimed at suppressing counterrevolutionary forces, resulting in the widespread use of the guillotine and the execution of thousands of individuals. This way, we can note that, during that era, the promotion of "terror" was synonymous with the persecution of those deemed enemies of the French Revolution. Notably, these "acts of terror" were officially sanctioned by a nation-state and its government – i.e., "terrorism" was *authorized* to operate within the confines of its borders (Hanhimäki and Blumenau, 2013).

Among this prevailing literature, David Rapoport (2013) represents a well-known author who reflects upon the (hi)stories of "terrorism". He developed a "theory of terrorists waves" in an attempt to provide a long-term perspective on "terrorism." In his writings, Rapoport (2013) understands that "terrorism" emerged in the late nineteenth century and, because of that, he considers that "unlike crime or poverty, international terrorism is a recent phenomenon" (p. 65). Moreover, he argues that, since then, there have been four waves of "international terrorism:" the anarchist wave; the anti-colonial wave; the new left wave; and the religious wave.

According to Rapoport (2013), the first wave, the anarchist one, flourished in the late nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century. In this wave, we saw the assassination of high-ranking leaders, such as the Czar Alexander II, in 1881; French President Marie François Sadi Carnot, in 1894; the U.S. President William McKinley, in 1901; and the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Franz Ferdinand, killed in 1914 by the Serbian group known as the Black Hand.

Rapoport (2013) considers such assassinations to belong to a global wave of attacks made by the "anarchist movement," which targeted high-profile individuals, and were, at that time, considered "terrorism." However, it is interesting to note that, according to Rapoport (2013), the practitioners of these acts did not hide behind semantic camouflages. On the contrary, they proclaimed themselves "terrorists" and claimed that they were carrying out "terrorist tactics."

The anti-colonial wave of "terrorism," according to Rapoport (2013), can be observed especially after the Second World War (1939-1945), for he understands

that it acquired revolutionary connotations. In this period, violent uprisings were waged by nationalist/native anti-colonial groups that emerged in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East from the 1940s and through the 1950s against colonizing powers. But, unlike anarchist demonstrations, the idea adopted in the "Third World" was that those fighting against colonial oppression and/or Western domination should not be described as "terrorists." They would be more properly defined as "freedom fighters."

Therefore, as per Rapoport (2013), generalizations about "terrorism" that contemplated the nineteenth century were no longer useful for its new manifestations. Also, throughout the twentieth century, various nationalist liberation movements used targeted or random assassinations and bombings to advance political agendas. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) and *the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC) are well-known examples usually associated to this wave singled out by Rapoport (2013).

Regarding the New-Left wave, Rapoport (2013) understands it emerged in response to the Vietnam War (1955-1975). This way, according to the author, this third wave, that took place during the 1960s and 1970s, could still be regarded within a revolutionary context. However, its meaning had now expanded to include separatist groups – ethnic or nationalist – outside the colonial or neo-colonial framework, as well as "radical organizations" with entirely ideological motivations.

Well-known examples associated by Rapoport (2013) to this wave are the Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF), the *Front du Libération du Québec* (FLQ) and *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA). For these groups adopted "terrorism" as a means of drawing attention to their respective causes, in many cases with a specific objective, like fighting their colonial predecessors, or of attracting international sympathy and support.

According to Rapoport (2013), the fourth wave, the religious wave, started in 1979 and it would survive for at least 40 years. This wave, as per the author, is probably what most analysts and commentators immediately think about nowadays when trying to define "terrorism." The author believes that Islam and Muslims are at the core of "religious terrorism." In this sense, he considers that the Iranian (or Islamic) Revolution, in 1979, was a catalyzing event of this new wave that, not long after, swallowed the whole Middle East and presented us actors such as Osama Bin Laden, *al-Qaeda*, Taliban and, more recently, the Islamic State.

Lisa Stampnitzky (2013) is another author who focuses her attention on the fluidity and instability of "terrorism." Her work proposes to show that there are constant debates and disputes about which violent manifestations are legitimate or illegitimate, rational, or irrational. Thus, in order to demonstrate how contested this phenomenon is, Stampnitzky (2013) makes a genealogy of "terrorism," following the work of U.S. experts and policy makers. In other words, her study pays attention to the disciplinarization of "terrorism" in the USA. Put simply, her study starts with the assumption that the decades from the 1970s on have brought with them considerable variations with regard to the meaning of "terrorism" and the actions taken in relation to it.

Stampnitzky (2013) draws four major temporal framings regarding "terrorism," namely: 1) during the 1970s the discourse on "terrorism" was focused on insurgency and associated with the fear and the combat of aircraft hijackings; 2) throughout the 1980s, attention was given to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), and to the accusations that the USSR would be a "global sponsor of terrorism;" 3) during the 1990s, a new picture was drawn because of the so-called "emergence of new threats," a "post-Soviet danger" in which "terrorism" would have become increasingly dangerous and powerful, as it had access to Weapons of Mass Destruction; and, 4) after 2001, when the "War on Terror" would emerge throughout the Bush administration (2001-2009), and where the notion of an "immorality inherent to 'terrorism'" and its almost immediate association with "Islamic fundamentalism" would gain more space.

Philippe Bonditti is another author who has been reflecting on "terrorism" for some time (2001; 2013; 2014; 2017, to name a few). Similarly to Stampnitzky (2013), Bonditti (2014) pays attention to how "terrorism" was conceived during the second half of the 20th century in the USA.

Bonditti (2014) highlights that, during the 1960s, "terrorism" was invoked – by the military and by experts – to refer to "insurgents". This way, it was implied "terrorism" was a tactic/strategy used by "insurgent groups" to spread fear. During the 1970s and the 1980s, in the context of the "Cold War," "terrorism" became primarily described as an "international" phenomenon, that is, it was described as the manifestation of extraordinary acts of violence – such as kidnappings and bombings – "perpetrated outside US national territory and supported by foreign powers," especially the USSR (p. 193). During the 1990s, on the other hand,

considering the dissolution of the USSR, "terrorism" became increasingly associated with "rogue states." In the beginning of the 21st century, after the "September 11, 2001" attacks, however, it would be contradictorily described by the Bush administration as a "new political and strategic enemy" (Bonditti, 2014, p. 192).

A reader of Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Paul Virilio and Pierre Bourdieu – among others – Bonditti's contributions on "terrorism" lie specially on paying attention to how agencies, professionals of politics and security, heads of state and experts "do not seem to agree on what this concept exactly is supposed to describe" (2014, p. 192-193). Starting from the assumption that "terrorism" is an "essentially contested concept"[51], Bonditti (2014) calls our attention to the idea that this word is constantly accompanied by another descriptive terms, such as "left-wing," "right-wing," "Islamist," "domestic," "international," "transnational," and so on. More specifically regarding the USA, like David Whittaker (2005)[52], he observes how the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Congress, the FBI, the Department of State, the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Department of Defense (DOD) provide different definitions and different strategies to deal with "terrorism" (Bonditti, 2014).

Indeed, Bonditti (2014) recognizes that various U.S. agencies and different states attempted to develop definitions of "terrorism." However, he also considers that, within the U.S. context, even though there is a multiplicity of definitions of "terrorism," "that does not in fact reveal a profound heterogeneity in the perception of political violence" (2014, p. 200). On the contrary, Bonditti considers that agencies such as the CIA, the FBI, the DOJ and the DOD agree on what matters for

[51] Walter B. Gallie first presented this idea on the *Meeting of the Aristotelian Society*, in 1956. According to him, "This is what I mean by saying that there are concepts which are essentially contested: concepts the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users" (p. 166).

[52] In the beginning of this book, *Terrorism: Understanding the Global Threat*, David Whittaker (2005) singles out some definitions of "terrorism" provided by U.S. agencies and notes how they present different focuses. Here are some the examples provided by the author: "The unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives (FBI); [t]he calculated use of violence or the threat of violence to inculcate fear, intended to coerce or intimidate governments or societies as to the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious or ideological (US Department of Defense); [p]remeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups of clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience (US State Department)" (Whittaker, 2005, p. 18, my translation).

them. In other words, they agree that "terrorism" has a political nature, that "it" implies the existence of "intimidation" – as "it" has been considered a phenomenon used by collectives or individuals which were most of the time endorsed and sponsored by some *other* nations – and that, because of these characteristics, there was, is, and will be a need for "anti-terrorism" policies (2014, p. 200-201). This way, Bonditti (2014, p. 203) highlights that, even if not identical, these definitions "did not as much reflect divergences in the perception of political violence, as divergences in interests and institutional cultures linked to the structuration of security prerogatives."[53]

This way, Bonditti (2014, p. 193) argues that "to analyze how the term 'terrorism' is being used tells much more about those who speak about "terrorism" than about violence itself." Paying attention especially to the second half of the 20th century, Bonditti (2014) also points out that in the U.S. agencies and experts established distinctions among "domestic terrorism," "international terrorism" and "transnational terrorism".

The first pair[54] – that of "domestic" and "international" types of "terrorism" – would find support in the modern political division of a sovereign-statist-inside

[53] Bonditti (2014) exemplifies this situation as follows: "The Department of State […] highlights the 'non-combatant' status (and not the civilian status) of the victims as a distinctive criterion of the targets of 'terrorism' and hence of the 'terrorist' nature of a specific act of violence. This definition allows for the State Department to label as 'terrorist' any act committed against diplomats or against US civilians abroad, for whose protection it is responsible.[…] More fundamentally, it allows for the dissociating of 'terrorism' from a strictly military perspective. It actualizes the efforts deployed by US diplomacy in the 1970s to create a constraining legal antiterrorist regime at the international level. This regime was also to allow for the individualization and criminalization of transnational political violence. The Department of Defense's definition […] evokes motivations of a religious nature. It thus seems to respond to the attacks carried out against US interests at this time, first in Lebanon (against a Marine barracks), then in Kuwait, in a region that became at this very moment (1983–1986) a crucially important strategic area, as shown by the creation of the Central Command in charge of the Middle East. As with each of the other three regional commands, it is responsible for the protection of the US military personnel deployed in the area. The US Army definition of terrorism insisted on social criteria as well as on fear, both of which are linked to the definition of guerrilla movements in the 1960s and which allowed the army to highlight and to actualize its well-routinized know-how developed in the context of counterinsurgency campaigns. The Army also did not put much focus on the illegal character of the acts of violence, preferring in this regard the more vague, 'Terrorism involves a criminal act' […]" (Bonditti, 2014, p. 201).

[54] As he highlights, "[t]he international/ domestic distinction established inside the definition of 'terrorism' thus does not reflect a duality of widely different practices of violence occurring either on national territory or abroad. Above all, it mirrors spatial and functional divisions in the field of security (between internal and external security, between police and military, between external intelligence and internal counter-intelligence), along which the security apparatuses of modern states have historically been articulated. The instrumentalization of political violence is thus less the defining feature of 'states sponsoring terrorism', as of the security agencies themselves. If not necessarily conscious, being more surely the result of complex processes of professional

versus an anarchical-diffuse-outside (Walker, 1993), wherein "domestic terrorism" would take place within the borders of a sovereign state in the form of interpersonal violence (crime), and "international terrorism" would take place when *other* sovereign states promoted it, in the form of inter-state violence (war) (Bonditti, 2014)[55]. The third definition, that is, that of "transnational terrorism," would refer to acts of violence carried out by "non-state actors". However, as Bonditti (2014) shows, this definition considered that non-state actors could have the support of other states.

Bonditti (2014) directs our attention to a crucial aspect concerning the definitions of "terrorism" within the U.S. context. According to him, that country's definitions rely upon the "spatialization" and "temporalization" of political violence (p. 203-205). Regarding spatialization, the author says it depends on a dual movement, those of "territorialization" and "de-territorialization" of political violence. While the "territorialization of terrorism" would be observed in the idea of "international terrorism," which emphasizes that "terrorist violence" comes from *other* states – distinct and identifiable sovereign entities, with geographical boundaries and territorial coordinates – the "de-territorialization of terrorism" would be observed in its detachment from specific territorial confines. In other words, "de-territorialized terrorism" would find better elucidation in the idea of "transnational terrorism," denoting acts of violence orchestrated by a network of groups or individuals devoid of affiliations with a particular state.

With regard to the "temporalization of terrorism," Bonditti (2014) demonstrates that not only do experts on "terrorism" rely upon the "domestic/international" divide; rather, they also emphasize that "terrorism" could be regarded as both "the use of violence" or "the threat of use of violence" (p. 205). This way, when it comes to definitions of "terrorism" that rely upon different temporalities, the emphasis does not lie, in this context, on

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socializations than of any rational decision, the instrumental use of the 'terrorist' label by government agencies nevertheless allowed them to justify their role in the antiterrorist architecture being created at that time" (Bonditti, 2014, p. 203).

[55] According to Bonditti (2014, p. 198), "the international meaning of 'terrorism' allowed for the reintegration of political violence into the order of state violence, while its domestic form limited it to the status of individual violence. In this way, the traditional categories of the political and the distinction between inter-state violence (war) on the one hand, and inter-personal violence (crime) on the other, was projected onto political violence in general. In this sense, the 'international' and 'domestic' qualifiers aimed at subsuming political violence under , modernity's political economy of violence. Indeed, the reproduction of the categories of crime and war will allow, as we shall see, for the legal and/or legitimate intervention of governmental security agencies."

> the potentiality of the *effects* of violence that is stressed, but the potentiality of the *act itself*. Thus "terrorism" is no longer limited to a set of violent acts seen from the point of view of their factuality or of a temporality of effects in the aftermath of the act (Bonditti, 2014, p. 205-206).

On the contrary, "it came to embrace a temporality prior to the act itself, during which violence was anticipated and the potential eruption of violence itself was to be feared." (Bonditti, 2014, p. 205-206). This way, these two distinct temporalities imply that there could be either an "act/event" of "terrorism," or the "threat" of "terrorism." Beyond the conventional distinction between "internal" and "external" manifestations, Bonditti (2014) underscores the existence of an "actual/potential" dichotomy. This dichotomy, in turn, introduces the prospect of contemplating "terrorism" in advance of the actual occurrence of violent acts themselves (p. 205).

This way, the author notably sheds light on how, after the attacks of September 11, 2001, agencies such as the FBI brought out an emphasis on the "treat of terrorism" – and this can be observed in the definitions I mentioned a few pages ago. Before the attacks, Bonditti (2014) points out, emphasis was placed on the *act* of violence itself. This way, it is important to bear in mind that these "international/domestic" and "actual/potential" divides help, among other things, to legally inform many agencies and their investigatory/action powers, especially contemporarily.

Bearing in mind all these different and conflicting definitions and attempts to promote accounts on "terrorism," it is possible to understand that "terrorism" is highly symbolic and perceptive: we are not neutral in its definition. In the same sense, "terrorist" is a pejorative term. It relies on the spatialization – of groups, individuals and states – and temporalization – of acts of violence *to come*. It is not a descriptive and neutral term. It is asymmetrically opposed[56] to "democracy," "law," "humanity," "security" and "peace" – to name a few. It is a word with intrinsically negative connotations that generally applies to "enemies," outside(r)s, opponents or to those with whom one disagrees. In this sense, what is called "terrorism" seems to depend on the speaker's perspective (Jenkins, 1980).

[56] This idea is further explored in section 2.4.2.

This way, the decision to label someone, an organization or a State as a "terrorist" is inevitably subjective. It seems to depend largely on sympathy or opposition to the person/group/cause. It also seems to depend on how some institutions want to "counter" it. In other words, when there is identification with the victim of violence, the act against she/he can be considered "terrorism;" however, if the identification is with the perpetrator, the violent act is viewed with more sympathy, it is seen more positively, and probably not as "terrorism" but as "resistance" or something else. In this sense, whenever we come across this term, it is important to wonder: what is being labeled as "terrorism?" When? Where? Why? By whom? More importantly: How?

"Terrorism" is a political label, an organizing concept that claims (or is invoked) to describe a phenomenon, and at the same time offers a moral judgment. However, we must remember that labels and proper names legitimize, justify and authorize political actions – wars, interventions, invasions, bans, incarcerations, persecutions, assassinations, and so forth.

In this sense, "terrorism" is a simplification that can be useful (for those who mobilize it) and dangerous (for those directly struck by it). It brings together descriptive, evocative, and symbolic elements – but its meanings are inherently flexible and ambiguous. In contemporary politics, calling opponents "terrorists" is a way of defining them as "fanatic" and "irrational," a way of preventing any possibility of compromise, of drawing attention to a "threat to security," and encouraging solidarity exclusively toward those identified as threatened and in "need of defense" (Barkawi and Laffey, 2006).

Examining and reflecting upon efforts that involve labeling "terrorism" allows for the recognition of shifts and blurriness in its conceptualization. These blurred, ungraspable shifts encompass changes in the individuals supporting/condemning "it," the entities identified as "terrorists," and the methods and goals associated with such acts.

This perspective reveals the dynamic and mutable qualities of the representation of "terrorism:" a phenomenon/name characterized by instability, fluidity, manipulability, and a disturbing multiplicity of meanings. Consequently, that is why I sustain that, if we are to acknowledge "its" nuanced and multiple dimensions, we must also recognize that any reference to "terrorism" necessitates

a measure of suspension, denoted by the placement of the term within quotation marks.

In the same vein, I believe that seeking a single definition results in attempts to essentialize the complexity and the spatiotemporal mobility of what is considered "terrorism." As such, in my readings and reflections, I do not start from a "one size fits all" perspective (Hanhimäki and Blumenau, 2013). And why do I insist on this point? Because there are hundreds, even thousands, of definitions of "terrorism." Walter Laqueur (2005), for example, points out that he managed to identify more than 100 different definitions of terrorism – and that was almost 20 years ago.

More than that, because such definitions are, in most cases, produced by those trying to create appropriate arrangements to undertake "counterterrorism" strategies (Bonditti, 2014). Furthermore, as I mentioned earlier, such definitions are extremely subjective, especially when they walk hand in hand with words like "illegitimate use of force," "innocent victims." For, if there is an "illegitimate" use of force, it is implied that there is a "legitimate" use of force; also, it is implied that if there are "innocent victims," there may be "guilty casualties" or "innocent casualties" (Barkawi and Laffey, 2006).

In presenting these varied and at times confronting definitions of "terrorism," my purpose was not to seek closure. On the contrary, my idea in this section was to wander through the complex roads that could lead us to quite different places when contemplating "terrorism." In short, my reflections so far point to the idea of what "terrorism" is *not.*

It is *not* a phenomenon that unexpectedly emerged in the 21st century – it did not emerge on September 11, 2001. It is *not* an unmodified concept, for as we observed with the help of Rapoport (2013), Stampnitzky (2013) and Bonditti (2014), it has already been considered a phenomenon of subnational violence, a component of conflicts that do not involve states, a religious manifestation, and so on. In this sense, and at least for now, the only affirmation I would risk making

about "terrorism" is that it is a *floating, empty* "signifier"[57] – i.e., a spectral trace[58] (Edkins, 1999; Marchart 2007). That is why "terrorism" is referred to as (un)becoming – it is both in the process of becoming/unbecoming something different and it is considered something unfit, inappropriate, unacceptable[59]. It is also, above all, a topic that has provoked and still provokes violent emotions and responses.

As I aim to demonstrate in the course of this dissertation, I contend that the *persisting, haunting, eluding* qualities of "terrorism" as a challenging security matter in the USA stems from the inherent impossibility of conclusively defining it. In other words, since it keeps *eluding* a universal definition, it *survives* and *persists* as a specter that *haunts* different contexts, situations, peoples, places and times. What is at stake here is the thought that the absence of an ultimate ground (Marchart, 2007) – that this groundless ground (Yamato, 2021) – of "terrorism" is itself the condition of its possibility. Its condition of possibility lies in the impossibility of its closure – as a well-bounded name, phenomenon, and problem.

As I highlighted in the beginning of this section, in fighting this *haunting, persistent, eluding problem*, "terrorism," places like the USA frame it as an existential threat. This framing has justified and still justifies extreme preventive measures – be they political, legal, military, or academic responses – which had and

[57] As we may observe in Jacques Derrida's "*Of Grammatology*," theorists like Saussure posit that the "sign" denotes the "signifier" or the "sound-image" representing, in turn, the "signified" or the concept (Butler, 2016, p. 14). Conversely, Derrida (2016) challenges the Saussurean position by suggesting that even if the distinctiveness of a signifier arises from its differentiation from other signifiers, it relies on and activates an open field of endless remittances. Consequently, when I suspend, between quotation marks, the term "signifier" and designate it as a trace or a specter, I engage with Derrida's contestation of the establishment of a closed system that would be capable of accounting signifying processes. I further elaborate on this in sections 2.4.1 and 3.2

[58] As I show in subsection 3.2.1, and according to Paulo Cesar Duque-Estrada (2020) and Jaques Derrida (2006), if each signifier carries within itself the trace of other signifiers within its system, we must stop talking about a "signifier" outside quotation marks and chose to work with the ideas of a *trace* that *haunts* through a condition of *spectrality* (Derrida, 2006 [1994]).

[59] This play of words is possible because the word *unbecoming* has many meanings. According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionary (2023), this word means: "1- not suiting a particular person. Synonym: unflattering; 2 - unbecoming (to/of) somebody: not appropriate or acceptable. Synonym: inappropriate." However, *becoming* is also the present continuous of the verb *to become,* and by adding the prefix -un, *unbecoming* could also mean the opposite of "starting to be." Once again, I must highlight that I was haunted and inspired by the ideas of others. In this case, I owe the use of "unbecoming" to Suzana Velasco, whose Doctoral Dissertation explores the idea of "unbecoming refugees." See: Velasco, Suzana; Walker, R. B. J. (Advisor). Unbecoming Refugees: Shuffled Stories and the Politics of Imagination. Rio de Janeiro, 2024. Tese de Doutorado - Instituto de Relações Internacionais, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro.

still have serious and violent long-term consequences on the lives of thousands of peoples (Wolfendale, 2016).

In this sense, after exploring a word/name/phenomenon/subject that is valuable to this work, that is "terrorism," and how it eludes a closed definition, I believe it is important to narrow down my focus in the next section. This way, in the following pages I pay attention to the U.S. endeavors against "terrorism" during the 21st century and try to illustrate how "it" eluded a closed definition but kept being mobilized.

2.3
The U.S. foreign policy as a boundary-producing-political-performance

> A strange place need not be foreign; a foreign place need not be strange.
>
> Hans Lindahl (2013, p. 4).

It is no secret that there is a vast literature on the USA (Abrahamian, 2003; Ali, 2003; Campbell, 1990, 1998; Carothers, 2003; Clarke, 2017; Gonçalves and Teixeira, 2019; Mann, 2006; Pecequilo, 2003; Pecequilo e Forner, 2017; Poggio Teixeira, 2007; Procópio, 2001; Resende, 2012, 2013; Zinn, 2015 – the list goes indefinitely on), for, as I said in the first lines of this dissertation, thinking, writing, and talking about the USA is still an appealing activity. Consequently, most of us, as students, researchers, professors and/or thinkers of IR have already come across books, articles, documentaries, movies, and lectures on the U.S. role in the inter/national arena.

And, a part of these productions bring along a narrative that understands the USA as a place which history could be understood in observing temporal framings. Cristina Pecequilo (2003), for example, divides the U.S. history into three framings, namely: 1776-1945, that is, from the year of its independence and throughout its first steps in consolidating a "cohesive" nation; 1945-1990, that is, from the end of the Second World War and the consolidation of the U.S. economic, political and social "hegemony," towards the its rise as a "superpower" or "hegemonic power" that had the USSR and communism as its enemies during the so-called "Cold War;" and 1990-onwards, a period in which the U.S. international strategies are

considered to be somewhat obscured, as the weights and measures given to each region and each country are different – a period of "New Wars" (Kaldor, 2012), "War on Terror," "rivalries with China," "deep political polarization," and "Covid-19 pandemic."

In this sense, it seems that the USA has *also* been under the spotlight because conventional literature seems to agree that, since the end of the Second World War, in 1945, this country became a prominent actor (or, as some prefer to put it, a "superpower"[60]) whose actions affects and have affected several parts of the world. More than that, this literature sustains that the U.S. actions *matter* to the rest of the world (Nye Jr, 2002; Gonçalves and Teixeira, 2019).

Regarding how the USA performed its actions towards its "Wars on Terrors" after September 11, 2001, there were those who followed (and still follow) the idea that this country was a "superpower" and that after "the Cold War dragon had been slain," there remained "many snakes at America's feet," and among them, those which deserved special attention were "Islamist terrorists" for "[s]lowly and steadily, they were building up their capabilities and cadres to expand their jihad against the West" (Laipson, 2003, p. 1).

However, there is a dissident[61] literature that helps us understand that it is possible to re-think the U.S. actions and histories, rendering unfamiliar what is

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[60] Joseph Nye Jr. (2002) in *The Paradox of the American Power: Why the World's only Superpower can't go it alone*, sustains that "We became complacent during the 1990s. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, no country could match or balance us. We had unsurpassed global military, economic, and cultural power. The Gulf War at the beginning of the decade was an easy victory; and at the end of the decade, we bombed Serbia without suffering a single casualty. The economy grew and the stock market boomed. We resembled Britain in its mid-Victorian glory, but with even greater global reach." (p. ix). However, it is important to highlight that this self-centered depiction of the U.S. identity is not something exclusive to recent years. On the contrary, it can be observed in the words such as those of John O'Sullivan's *Manifest Destiny*: "America is destined for better deeds. It is our unparalleled glory that we have no reminiscences of battle fields, but in defence of humanity, of the oppressed of all nations, of the rights of conscience, the rights of personal enfranchisement. Our annals describe no scenes of horrid carnage, where men were led on by hundreds of thousands to slay one another, dupes and victims to emperors, kings, nobles, demons in the human form called heroes. We have had patriots to defend our homes, our liberties, but no aspirants to crowns or thrones; nor have the American people ever suffered themselves to be led on by wicked ambition to depopulate the land, to spread desolation far and wide, that a human being might be placed on a seat of supremacy. We have no interest in the scenes of antiquity, only as lessons of avoidance of nearly all their examples. The expansive future is our arena, and for our history." (O'Sullivan, 1839, n.p.). For a more detailed and critical appreciation on this subject, see: Resende, Erica Simone A. *Americanidade, puritanismo e política externa*: a reprodução da ideologia puritana e a construção da identidade nacional nas práticas discursivas da política externa norte-americana. Rio de Janeiro: Contra Capa, 2012.

[61] This literature does not (intend to) "claim to know the error of all previous ways and offering salvation from all theoretical sin"; rather, it "celebrates difference; the proliferation of perspectives,

taken as familiar, especially those actions concerning its foreign policy, its security agendas, and its relations towards the "other" (Campbell, 1998; Resende, 2012; Wilcox, 2015; Weber, 2002; Zehfuss, 2003). Also, through these lenses, U.S. foreign policy can be understood in terms of identity and difference[62]. In this sense, with regard to the USA, what "we" are is intrinsically linked to what "we" fear, i.e., what the United States "is" seems to walk hand in hand with what "it" fears (Campbell, 1998, p. 73).

It is extremely important to highlight that, when I mention the words "foreign policy," I follow especially Richard K. Ashley's (1987) and David Campbell's (1990, 1998) contributions. But, before drawing attention to their position and contribution to this dissertation, I need to take a step back and think about how IR literature traditionally conceives "foreign policy," so that I could show how, here, I follow a different path.

According to traditional literature, "foreign policy" means "policies and actions of national governments oriented towards the external world outside their own political jurisdictions" (Caporaso *et al.* 1986, p. 5). Also, according to the National Museum of American Diplomacy (2023) foreign policy "is how a country uses different strategies to guide its relationships with other countries and international organizations" (n. p.). Regarding the U.S. foreign policy, the National Museum of American Diplomacy (2023, n.p.) adds that

> The foreign policy of the U.S. government may change between different presidential administrations. However, the guiding principles of U.S. foreign policy remain constant: promotion of security, democracy, prosperity, and development in the United States and around the world.

According to Rosenau (1970, p. 366), the core of what is known as foreign policy "consists of all the attitudes and activities through which organized national societies seek to cope with and benefit from their international environment." More than that, he conceives foreign policy as an adaptative behavior concerned with

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dimensions and approaches to the very real dilemmas of global life [...] not because it favors a (so-called) relativist retreat into the incommensurability of alternatives, but because it recognizes the universalist conceits of all attempts to force difference into the straitjacket of identity [...] it is a form of dissent which questions the very way our problems have been posed in these terms and the constraints within which they have been considered, and focuses instead on the way the world has been made historically possible" (Campbell, 1998, p. 5).

[62] I elaborate further on "identity," "difference" and "otherness" in Chapter 5, section 5.2.

"life and death, freedom and slavery, prosperity and poverty" (p. 366) – problems which must be continuously solved in order to accomplish each country's established goals.

Fatih Tayfur (1994) follows the same path and highlights that "foreign policy is the behaviour of states mainly towards other states in the international system through their authorised agents" (p. 113). He complements this definition by stating that foreign policy is a governmental activity which has a clear-cut division between what is domestic and what is foreign.

Milner and Tingley (2015), in turn, claim that foreign policy is a means through which "a sovereign nation interacts with other sovereign nations and non-state actors outside its borders" (p. 7). It is, then, a policy instrument that deals with issues concerned with immigration, diplomacy, economic aid, international trade, sanctions, military forces, and military spending - to name a few (p. 7).

This way, "foreign policy" is conceived by these authors as a governmental activity of an agent, a subject, an ontico-ontological given entity – a pre-existing "Being"[63] – the sovereign State, the Nation, the Nation-State, and, in this dissertation, that would be the case of the USA. In this sense, while domestic and foreign policy are both understood as activities formulated within the state, foreign policy would only be implemented in the environment that is external to the state (*high politics*), an area with which domestic politics (*low politics*) should not deal with (Tayfur, 1994, p. 115).

Indeed, numerous other scholarly contributions delve into the examination of "foreign policy," encompassing areas like "Foreign Policy Analysis" and "Comparative Foreign Analysis." However, due to the expansive nature of these analyses, they regrettably fall beyond the scope of the current dissertation, and a comprehensive coverage of all aspects is unfeasible within this discussion (refer, for instance, to Allison, 1971; Kissinger, 1994; Putnam, 1988; Rosenau, 1966; Smith, 1986; Snyder et al., 1954). This way, for the purposes of this work, suffice to understand that these contributions, like those I illustrated above, distinguish "foreign policy" from "domestic policy" and assume the existence of pre-given identities and behaviors. In this dissertation, however, as I mentioned before, I

[63] The ideas of the "ontic," the "ontological," "Being" and "being" are explored in Chapter 3.

follow a different path – specially the one made possible by Ashley (1989) and Campbell (1990, 1998).

Drawing inspiration from Richard Ashley, I was prompted to wonder: what if we were to reimagine "foreign policy" under different lights?

> Why not understand foreign policy as a specific sort of interpretive performance whose overlapping effects include (a) the constitution and empowering of states and other subjects, (b) the defining of their socially recognized competencies, and (c) the securing of the boundaries that differentiate domestic and international, economic, and political spheres of practice and, with them, the proper domains in which specific subjects may secure recognition and competently act? (Ashley, 1987, p. 53).

According to this position, here I do not understand foreign policy as an intrinsic "behavior across boundaries" (Ashley, 1987, p. 51). Rather, I follow (Ashley, 1987, p. 51), and conceive foreign policy as a "boundary-producing-political-performance." However, prior to delving into this particular idea, it is prudent to take a brief detour, once again, and direct our focus towards the notions of boundary, border, and limits. This is essential as there exists an extensive body of critical literature that discusses these subjects (Shapiro, 1997; Vaughan-Williams, 2009; Walker, 2009; Lindahl, 2013; Balibar, 2017; Summa, 2021)[64].

Perhaps, most of us traditionally conceive a boundary as "a real or imagined line that marks the limits or edges of something and separates it from other things or places; a dividing line" (Oxford Learners' Dictionary, 2024). Borders, on the other hand, are conventionally thought of as "the line that divides two countries or areas […]" (Oxford Learners' Dictionary, 2024). Limits, in turn, generally appear as "1) the greatest or smallest amount of something that is allowed" or "2) a point at which something stops being possible or existing."

Hans Lindahl (2013), R. B. J. Walker (2009) and Nick Vaughan-Williams (2009) remind us that these features constantly invoked and evoked in our political vocabularies have been widely accepted without much scrutiny. This way, we must draw attention to the fact that not only do they operate as "constituent features" of "legal orders" (Lindahl, 2013, p. 2), but they also play a pivotal role in the politics orchestrated within the international – politics that allow and veto (im)possibilities

[64] Even though this literature warrants our acknowledgment, since I propose a brief detour, here I pay attention to the contributions of R. B. J. Walker (2009) and Hans Lindahl (2013).

of distinguishing the acceptable-tidy-inside from some unacceptable-messy-world beyond (Walker, 2009, p. 3). This way, it is possible to highlight that these features of the international continuously and simultaneously discriminate and connect, include and exclude, and make distinctions between the normal and the exception, the friend and the foe, the universal and the particular, the legal, the illegal and the a-legal (Walker, 2009, p. 3; 102; Lindahl, 2013, p. 39-43; Vaughan-Williams, 2009).

Nick Vaughan-Williams (2009) pays specific attention to *borders.* He understands that they are "ubiquitous in [and constitutive of] political life" (p. 1). Also, according to the author, borders are neither given, natural, neutral nor static; rather they are (re)produced through processes of affirmation and contestation. More than that, he posits that through borders it is possible to constantly (re)affirm the dichotomies of inclusion/exclusion and inside/outside (p. 2).

Differently from Vaughan-Williams (2009), Lindahl (2013) and Walker (2009) resort to some differentiations among "boundaries, borders and limits." Nonetheless, as we may observe, they also conceive an intimate relationship among them and hold a critical position that is close to that of Vaughan-Williams (2009).

Lindahl (2013) understands that if we think of legal orders, we conceive a scenario that attempts to define "who ought to do what, where, and when" (p. 4). This way, ordering is encompassed by the ideas of *subjective, material, spatial* and *temporal* boundaries (p. 4). In other words, *boundaries* perform the merging and the separation of subjects, acts, places and times (p. 4). In this perspective, *borders* are conceived as "spatial boundaries" and, in so being, *borders* operate as outlines of states and other collectives (2013, p. 40).

Limits, in turn, distinguish an order from what remains unordered (2013, p. 4)[65]. That is, *limits* are noticeable when *strange* behaviors take place – when they irrupt *into* an order "from the domain of the unordered" and "transgress the spatial, temporal, subjective, and material boundaries that establish whether behavior is legal or illegal" (p. 3). This way, Lindahl (2013) posits that *boundaries* differentiate

[65] In his own words, "[i]f *boundaries* configure a legal order as a realm of practical possibilities available to participant agents, this realm is perforce *limited* because legal collectives can only configure themselves as concrete legal unities by excluding other possible realms of practical possibilities" (Lindahl, 2013, p. 4).

what is "legal" from what is "illegal". However *boundaries* manifest as *limits* when they are challenged by a-legality – i.e., by strange behaviors and situations (p. 3).

Also, as Lindahl (2013) reminds us, "any and every spatial boundary […] even the most 'mundane' and apparently insignificant, is also a limit that renders it *discontinuous* with a strange outside" (p. 43). However, in this scenario,

> […] the conditions that govern the genesis of a […] collective also continuously undermine the authoritative claim that there is a "we," the members of whom act jointly, and what it is that their joint action is about. The first-person plural perspective always comes second, and never entirely 'arrives:' boundary-setting folds pluralization into unification, disintegration into integration, estrangement into what becomes familiar, the second person into the first (Lindahl, 2013, p. 5-6).

In a similar vein, according to Walker we could acknowledge the articulation of "boundaries as borders" and of "boundaries as limits." Regarding the first idea, we may acknowledge that they operate as lines that demarcate landscapes (2009, p. 102). "Boundaries as limits," on the other hand, work in the definition of identities, jurisdictions and principles. However, it is important to stress that both manifestations are intimately entangled, for "limits in space, place and territory express limits in law, and limits in law express limits in power, authority, community, responsibility and liberty. […]" (2009, p. 102).

Indeed, we have been prompted to perceive boundaries, borders and limits as mere straightforward contours that delineate distinctions. However, we could – and should – regard them as complex features – i.e., as "complex sites and moments of political engagement" (Walker, 2009, p. 6). This way, instead of conceiving boundaries, borders and limits as simply static, given lines that divide – here/there, now/then, inside/outside –, we should pay attention to what makes them possible and to what happens when they are set in motion.

In this sense, we could resort to these contributions to think of how "foreign policy," much like a "legal order," resorts to what is considered legal, illegal and a-legal, or, I would add, to what is considered normal, abnormal and aberrant – to what belongs to the inside, to the outside, and to a doubled, unwelcome outside (Walker, 2006b). This way, we could conceive "foreign policy" as something which both joins and separates elements within a supposed unity while, however, unceasingly having its limits exposed by what is considered "aberrant." For

aberrant, a-legal "terrorist" manifestations appear as "outlandish" (Lindahl, 2013, p. 41).

This way, considering "foreign policy" as a boundary-producing-political-performance implies paying attention to the ways we are encouraged to both discriminate and authorize spatial, temporal, subjective and material boundaries (Walker, 2009; Lindahl, 2013). It also implies we pay attention to what is unceasingly being set in motion through claims of "sovereignty," "security," and "order" and to how they are made possible by borders and limits.

And why is that? Because "foreign policy" is constantly "taking place in a historically carved out social space, and having, among its important effects, the constitution and reaffirmation of socially recognized boundaries separating fields of practice on a global scale" (Ashley, 1987, p. 51). According to this position, it is possible to put into question boundaries traditionally established between "foreign/external" and "domestic/international" policy, for while these categories are routinely invoked, they seem to accommodate to the world(s) we observe and live in less and less (Ashley, 1987; Campbell, 1998; Vaughan-Williams, 2009).

Also, as Campbell (1998, p. 88) puts it, foreign policy can be conceived as "all those practices of differentiation implicated in the confrontation between self and other, and their modes of figuration." This way, it is possible to (re)think "foreign policy" as one boundary-producing practice that is substantial in the (re)production of "identities [and differences] of those in whose name it operates" (Campbell, 1998, p. 68).

More to the point, this position leads to a reevaluation of "foreign policy," transitioning away from a focus on interactions between states delineated by static, historical, and pre-existing boundaries. Instead, I draw attention to the delineation and establishment of boundaries that concurrently claim to define "the state and the international system, the domestic and the external, and the sovereign and the anarchic" (Campbell, 1990, p. 266).

It is also worth noting that, according to Campbell (1998), there are two understandings of "foreign policy" – i.e., foreign policy, with lowercase initials; and Foreign Policy, with capital initials. The first understanding considers "foreign policy" as a set of practices of differentiation/exclusion, that is, practices that define relations of *otherness*. For this reason, "foreign policy" is not linked to the state *per se*; rather, it is connected to a place of confrontations – the "self" *versus* the "other"

–, be they confrontations of class, gender, ethnic, racial, or geographic sites. These forms of "foreign policy" are fundamental, for they work in attempting to forge identities and sovereignties across space and through time (p. 69).

Also, this first understanding provides what Campbell (1998) calls the "discursive economy […] of interpretations in which the second understanding (Foreign Policy) operates" (p. 69). In other words, "Foreign Policy" refers to the conventional understanding –state-based Foreign Policy – in the IR discipline. But, instead of (re)constituting identities, it (re)produces and contains challenges to identities. "Foreign Policy" is, then, understood as "a discourse of power that is global in scope yet national in its legitimation" (p. 70). It emphasizes practices of exclusion, such as discourses of danger, representations of fear, and listing threats, and, at the same time, it downplays discourses of affirmation, those being religious beliefs, shared ethnicity, nationality, political ideas, and so on (p. 70).

Campbell (1998) and Ashley (1987) help us understand that there is more to look for with regard of what is considered "foreign." This way, even though "foreign always signified something that was on the outside and therefore distinguished from the inside" (Campbell, 1998, p. 37), this dissertation does not consider "foreign policy" as just something found and kept outside the borders of the state. Hence the idea of boundary-producing-political-performances that do not create clear-cut lines but are, rather, blurred, numerous and violent boundaries, borders and limits (Walker, 2009; Lindahl, 2013).

In this sense, "foreign policy" is taken here as a performance that works through the (re)production of unstable identities and that, concomitantly, makes efforts in attempting to contain challenges to these very same identities (Campbell, 1998, p. 71). As such, "foreign policy" operates as a logocentric relationship that objectifies the "self" through the representation of the dangers of the "other" (Derrida, 2016). Or, as Campbell (1998) puts it, "foreign policy" holds a privileged position in shaping the dangers with which we must contend. This process of objectification, in turn, resorts to plentiful representations and figurations – this holds true to many places, and some of these representations can be observed in the USA (p. 72).

This way, as we reflect upon the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" boundary-producing-political-performances (Ashley, 1987; Campbell, 1998), it is possible to interrogate these "Wars on Terrors" boundaries, borders and limits and to think of

how their contemporary practices strive for the discrimination among "history and progress inside […], a timeless anarchy outside" (Vaughan-Williams, 2009, p. 2) and an a-temporal, a-legal, unwelcome doubled outside (Walker, 2006b, 2009; Lindahl, 2013; Yamato, 2019)[66].

As I pointed out before, I argue that the U.S. foreign policy is an important security practice constantly reinforced through "conventional and dominant" political discourses preoccupied with combating *dangers* and *enemies* and objectifying *events* and *identities* of different *peoples* and *countries* (Campbell, 1998). However, as Campbell (1998) puts it, a specific and catastrophic event is not always imperative to provide a basis for the interpretation of danger in "foreign policy" practices.

On the contrary, the mere existence of alternative ways of being can be treated as dangerous. For "danger is not an objective condition. It (sic) is not a thing which exists independently of those to whom it may become a threat" (p. 1). Rather, danger is identified, re-produced, re-constituted, re-presented because, supposedly, "we" are threatened. In this sense, ironically, to overcome fear, fear is institutionalized (Campbell, 1998, p. 65). In addition, it is possible to suggest the continuous (re)articulations of danger, made through "foreign policy," do not represent a threat to the State *per se*, but its condition of possibility (p. 12)[67]. Therefore, "foreign policy" is acknowledged here, as a means to (re)produce identities, *foreignness* and practices of differentiation and exclusion through boundaries, borders and limits (Ashley, 1987; Campbell, 1990, 1998; Vaughan-Williams, 2009; Walker, 2009; Lindahl, 2013).

2.3.1
"Wars on Terrors"

> […] if we have to use force, it is because we are America; we are the indispensable nation. We stand tall and we see further than other countries into the future, and we see the danger here to all of us.
>
> Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright (1998, n.p.).

[66] Although I mention the idea of "double[d] outside" in this chapter, I only develop it in Chapter 5, section 5.2, for only at that point of my work will I be able to demonstrate that this other "outside" – this "double[d] outside" – plays a constitutive role regarding the international, the state and the modern individual and, therefore, regarding the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" (Walker, 1993; 2006; 2009; Yamato 2014; 2019).

[67] This suggestion is further elaborated in chapter 5, section 5.2.

Within the twenty-first century, the USA has been, so far, governed by four presidents: George Walker Bush (2001-2009), Barack Hussain Obama (2009-2017), Donald John Trump (2017-2021), and Joseph (Joe) Robinette Biden Jr. (2021 – present). These four presidents belong to two different Parties – the Republican Party, also known as Grand Old Party (GOP), and the Democratic Party – the two major contemporary parties in the USA. The alternation of power between these parties has been accompanied by divergent policy agendas, including varying perspectives on the approach to combating "terrorism"[6869].

However, despite their different agendas, Democrats and Republicans, as well as "left-wing" and "right-wing" media, seem to treat some actions of "counterterrorism," especially military ones, as "no brainers". According to Catherine Lutz (2014, p. 188),

> They treat it as a "*no brainer*" that the security of the United States grows when the military budget or the size of the army grows, and that it is sensible for the federal government to spend more on the military than on protecting the environment, educating children, building transport systems, developing energy sources, agriculture, and job skills in the populace, and getting people into housing – combined. In these discussions, *it goes without saying* that the military serves the nation and/or the world as a whole, "policing" it for the common

[68] According to Winkler (2006), there is a long-standing debate – on academic and political circles – about which metaphor – "war" or "crime" – would be the most appropriate to apply to "terrorism". The author shows that, in the USA, while Democrats prefer to focus on narratives that feature "crime," Republicans tend to borrow from stories that focus on the metaphor of war. This focus, however, does not mean an exclusive focus on whether "crime" or "war". Rather, "both groups have resisted an exclusive focus" (p. 11). Then, it is important to stress that in chapter 4 I explain why I still choose to talk about "Wars on Terrors."

[69] It is important to highlight that I am aware that "terrorism" has long been considered a threat in the USA – it is something that could not be restricted to a temporal framing that only englobes the 21st century. I show that in more detail in Chapter 3. Also, I already mentioned Stampnitzky's (2013), that looks at the USA from the 1970s onwards, and I think it is interesting to read this excerpt of Campbell's perception, written long before September 11th, 2001, in which he illustrates how "terrorism" already appeared as a source of "fear" in the U.S. foreign policy: "The election of the Reagan administration saw the implementation of the neo-conservatives evangelism of fear and, consequentially, the beginning of the second cold war. But the disciplining of identity was not left to the techniques of anticommunism alone. In part because the hysteria of the early cold war could not be easily copied - though many of its strategies were reproduced – new targets of exclusion were found. Most notably, those who had once been pursued on the grounds that they or their activities and beliefs were revolutionary, subversive, or militant, were (from the mid-1970s on) subsumed under the label 'terrorist.' […] Once the designation of terrorist was made, any one thought to be associated in any way with a group so defined could be placed under scrutiny. Moreover, the definition of 'terrorism' is very loose and extremely wide-ranging: Californian state law criminalizes gang membership as 'street terrorism,' while local authorities in Rhode Island established in 1985 a 'Terrorist Extremist Suppression Team' which served to monitor left-wing political groups and peace activists" (Campbell, 1998, p. 166).

> good. These stories assume that above all we live in a world of threat and risk, of enemies and allies, and of national and state rather than global and human interests as operative values. They assume that all civilians addressed by those media outlets are American citizens who are happy to pay the Pentagon's bills and who want nothing but victory or honorable withdrawal from fights around the world. […] the values associated with the military as an institution – obedience, loyalty, duty, honor, conformity – should be the primary values of the civilian world as well: it assumes that soldiering builds character more than nursing does.

This way, through what Lutz (2014) calls a "military normal" – i.e., "the massive investments in war and in the public relations of war, and the assorted beliefs that sustain them all" (p. 185) – divergent politicians, journalists, analysts and military personnel may disagree on how long an "intervention" on places like Iraq and Afghanistan should last; how much money the defense machine would spend on wars; or how these wars should be fought, "with what tactics, for how long, and with what level of 'success.'" (p. 183). But, on the other hand, even if their debates pointed, for instance, that the Bush administration used lies to sustain the "Iraq war;" they did not question the U.S. presence either in Afghanistan nor in Iraq; and even if they worried about bringing the military home, they did not seem to be worried about the U.S. accountability of numerous illegal actions during these (and many other) wars (Lutz, 2014). If we are to understand that different political accounts regarding "terrorism" and "Wars on Terrors" do not necessarily mean outstanding contrasts, Lutz (2014) contribution should be taken into account in the next pages.

Concerning the administrations that held Executive power in the USA during the last decades and their position towards "terrorism," it is important to note that the Bush administration coined the proper name "War on Terror." On September 20, 2001, a few days after the September, 11 attacks, in the *Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People*, Bush stated that "Our *war on terror* begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated." (2001, n.p.).

A call to war, a persistent war, a "War on Terror", was made. On the one side, "The civilized world is rallying to America's side. They understand that if this terror goes unpunished, their own cities, their own citizens may be next." (Bush, 2001, n.p.); on the other side there was "terrorism," something that if "[…] unanswered,

cannot only bring down buildings, it can threaten the stability of legitimate governments." (Bush, 2001, n.p.).

In this administration, recurring to the threat of "terrorism," a name that eludes definition, made it possible to aggregate different profiles of external threats and frame them in the so-called *axis of evil* – which encompassed Iraq, Iran and North Korea followed by Libya, Syria, and Cuba (Pecequilo and Forner, 2017). Also, the focus on the role of religion and on the idea that violence stemmed from religious fundamentalism ended up framing Islam and its followers as prospective "terrorists" that threatened "civilization" (National Security Strategy, 2002). "Terrorism" was, then, territorialized in specific countries, personalized in specific nationalities and religious beliefs, and temporalized, as a "threat" to come towards not only the USA, but also the "civilized world" (Bonditti, 2014).

In this scenario, throughout the National Security Strategy (NSS) of 2002, Bush's administration stated that "[t]he struggle against global terrorism is different from any other war in our history. It will be fought on many fronts against a particularly elusive enemy over an extended period of time" (p. 5). Furthermore, in the name of self-defense and the unequaled and unpostponable commitment to detain "terrorism," it was emphasized that "[…] we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists, to prevent them from doing harm against our people and our country." (National Security Strategy, 2002, p.6).

Also, during this administration "terrorism" was directly linked to *al-Qaeda* and the Taliban. And, consequently, countries with a Muslim majority, located mainly in the Middle East, as well as their populations, became the target of constant military constraints. In this sense, President Bush announced the grounds of a path the USA should follow: "an endless War on Terror" with "diffuse enemies and means of combat" in which those who were not with the USA would be against it. (Bush, 2001; Resende, 2013, p. 8, my translation).

Under the motto of "promoting democracy around the world," curiously,

> The United States face[d] two contradictory imperatives: on the one hand, the fight against al Qaeda tempt[ed] Washington to put aside its democratic scruples and seek closer ties with autocracies throughout the Middle East and Asia. On the other hand, U.S. officials and policy experts have increasingly come to

> believe that it is precisely the lack of democracy in many of these countries that helps breed Islamic extremism (Carothers, 2003, p. 84).

During this administration, under the flag of a "War on Terror," there was the mobilization of a military power in order to deter, by all means necessary, "terrorists" in places like Iraq and Afghanistan (Mendes, 2016). In this sense, Iraq and Afghanistan became the targets of *Operation Enduring Freedom* (2002) and *Operation Iraqi Liberation* (2003), respectively; and people were indefinitely detained and tortured in Abu Ghraib (Gourevitch and Morris, 208) and more than 500 detainees were held, indefinitely, under torture, in the Guantánamo Bay detention center (Amnesty International, 2017; Butler, 2018; Slahi, 2015; Human Rights First, 2018).

When Barack Obama took office, there were optimistic expectations about the possibility of meaningful changes in the USA and on how his administration would carry out its inter/national politics (Obama, 2009b; 2009c). These expectations also concerned the opportunity of reformulating the strategies regarding the "War on Terror" (Mendes, 2016). In 2008, during his campaign, in an article titled *Renewing American Leadership,* published on *Foreign Affairs,* then Senator Barack Obama said that

> These threats demand a new vision of leadership in the twenty-first century – a vision that draws from the past but is not bound by outdated thinking. The Bush administration responded to the unconventional attacks of 9/11 with conventional thinking of the past, largely viewing problems as state-based and principally amenable to military solutions. It was this tragically misguided view that led us into a war in Iraq that never should have been authorized and never should have been waged. In the wake of Iraq and Abu Ghraib, the world has lost trust in our purposes and our principles [...] (Obama, 2007, p. 4).

He also pointed out he would work in order to finish the military operations in Iraq; end the practice of torture; close the Guantánamo Bay detention center; renounce unilateralism and re-engage with multilateral initiatives; end "Dumb Wars;"[70] and negotiate with U.S. traditional opponents such as Cuba, Iran, and

[70] On October 2, 2002, then Senator Barack Obama gave a "Speech Against the Iraq War" (Obama, 2009a). In this speech, he said: "That's what I'm opposed to. A dumb war. A rash war. A war based not on reason but on passion, not on principle but on politics" (n.p.). However, it is important to note that he makes it clear that "I am not opposed to all wars. I'm opposed to dumb wars" (n.p.). In this

Syria (Mendes, 2016; Obama, 2002, 2009). An administration claiming to be focused on exerting what they called "smart power."[71]

Already in office, one emblematic event during Obama's administration was the capture and assassination of Osama bin Laden, in Pakistan, in 2011 (Dixit, 2014). After that, in the context of the Islamic State's expansion in the "Middle East," Obama (2014, n.p.) declared that

> Still, we continue to face a terrorist threat. We can't erase every trace of evil from the world, and small groups of killers have the capacity to do great harm. That was the case before 9/11, and that remains true today. And that's why we must remain vigilant as threats emerge. At this moment, the greatest threats come from the Middle East and North Africa, where radical groups exploit grievances for their own gain. And one of those groups is ISIL -- which calls itself the "Islamic State."

However, as I pointed out before, these promises of a Nobel *Peace* Prize President did not achieve their goals (Jackson, 2011; Pecequilo and Forner, 2017). Although there were changes in this administration rhetoric, for it stopped talking about (re)producing a "War on Terror," the Obama administration still promoted what they called "overseas contingency operations" (Burkeman, 2009, n.p.) and a "War Against *Al-Qaeda* and its allies" (Scahill, 2014, p. 331) using drones and targeting countries and people in places like Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as resorting to secrecy and surveillance apparatus (Mendes, 2016; Pecequilo and Forner, 2017; Scahill, 2014; Vedaschi and Graziani, 2023).

Also, the withdrawal from Iraq also did not succeed and the Guantánamo Bay detention camp remained open (Jackson, 2011; Amnesty International, 2017). Additionally, new secret prisons outside of the U.S. territory, also referred to as "detentions abroad" or "black sites" were denounced, as well as the practice of "extraordinary renditions" (Scahill, 2011; Pecequilo and Forner, 2017; Vedaschi

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sense, long before becoming president, Barack Obama provides a path that justifies a division: some wars are still "smart," "imperative," and "good," opposed to "dumb wars," such as the one in Iraq.

[71] This expression was developed by Nye Jr. (2009) and means, in short, the combination of "hard power" (the ability to coerce and/or intimidate someone by using military and/or economic resources) and "soft power," (the ability to obtain positive results by using ideological and/or cultural resources and to persuade someone) in order to help making the best out of a situation. According to Vieira de Jesus (2014), Hillary Rodham Clinton popularized this expression while she was Secretary of the State (2009-2013). By claiming to be focused on using "smart power," the administration meant it would use all tools at its disposal – those being cultural, economic, diplomatic, military, political and/or juridical – according to each situation.

and Graziani, 2023). Also, as I show in Chapter 4, harsh measures against "violent extremists" as well as against im/migrants, refugees and asylum seekers took place in this administration. More than that, espionage "exceptional" practices, anticipated by the PATRIOT[72] Act of 2001 remained active (PATRIOT Act, 2001) until 2014 when, amidst denunciations made by Edward Snowden, the "USA FREEDOM Act[73]" was proclaimed (Pecequilo and Forner, 2017) with the promise to ban "the bulk collection of Americans' private records" and to provide "the Intelligence Community with the authority it needs to collect phone records in a more targeted manner" (USA FREEDOM Act, 2014, p. 1).

In a way, while promising more transparency and freedom, surveillance, secrecy, and "exceptional" measures remained operating to justify the fight against "terrorism." In this sense, it is possible to observe that while Obama's administration distanced its rhetoric from the language used by the Bush administration, by officially dropping the term "War on Terror," it remained committed to the idea that it was imperative to defeat "terrorism," for it was considered a continuous, eminent, existential threat (Wolfendale, 2016).

In 2017, Donald J. Trump took office. His words and actions were/are frequently considered eccentric, unpredictable and erratic (Gonçalves and Teixeira, 2019). His administration caught attention for it seemed to work in order to undo everything build under the previous administrations, since it considered all work done before him to be a failure (Ayerbe, 2018). Under the mottos "Make America Great Again!" during Trump's campaign in 2016, "Keep America Great!", during the campaign of 2020, and "America first!" this administration promised to govern in order to meet the needs of the U.S. population and to walk away from any costly commitment to distant territories, for it considered that

> It is not the duty of US troops to solve ancient conflicts in faraway lands, that many people have never heard of. […] We are not the policeman of the world. But let out enemies be on notice. If our people are threatened, we will never ever hesitate to act. And when we fight, from now on, we will only fight to win (Trump, 2020, n.p.).

[72] PATRIOT meaning Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (PATRIOT Act, 2001).
[73] Uniting and Strengthening America (USA) by Fulfilling Rights and Ensuring Effective Discipline Over Monitoring (FREEDOM) Act of 2015.

If we take the declarations and promises made by President Trump as "the truth," we could say that contrary to the previous administrations, his seemed to defend that war should be fought just as a last resource and that his attention should be exclusively dedicated to the population of the USA. However, it is important to stress that, amidst the actions carried out during the Trump administration, the Guantánamo Bay detention center remained open and was considered the most expensive prison in the world (Swain, 2019). [74]More than that, this situation was justified through the *Executive Order on Protecting America Through Lawful Detention of Terrorists*, 2018[75]. Also, there was the establishment of immigration barriers[76] concerning, for example, Mexico, as well as the detention of more than 5,400 children who were kept apart from their parents (NBC, 2021), through Executive Orders such as the *Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements* (Federal Register, 2017a) and *Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States* (Federal Register, 2017b).

The Trump administration also announced the "Muslim Ban" through the *Executive Order Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States*, 2017. Also, while telling white supremacist organizations such as "the Proud Boys" to "stand back, and stand by," former President Trump issued a *Memorandum on Inadmissibility of Persons Affiliated with Antifa Based on Organized Criminal Activity* (2021)[77] which could backfire on movements such as "Occupy" and the "Black Lives Matter."

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[74] According to a material published in 2019, each of the forty detainees still held at Guantanamo costed approximately $13 million per year, which generated a total expense of $540 million annually. See, for example: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/16/us/politics/guantanamo-bay-cost-prison.html>.

[75] In his government, discriminatory attempts to ban the entry of "certain aliens" into the USA, Trump's issued Executive order 13769 in order to "protect the nation from foreign terrorist entry." The Executive Order stressed that "(i) Among other actions, Executive Order 13769 suspended for 90 days the entry of certain aliens from seven countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. These are countries that had already been identified as presenting heightened concerns about terrorism and travel to the United States." (Executive Order Protecting..., 2017). This Executive Order suffered an immediate juridical backlash, got suspended and was reformulated. On March 6, 2017, the administration published a revised Executive Order (E. O. 13780) which had the same title. Interestingly, while revoking some points of the former Executive Order – such as the mention of religion; the reference to the September 11 attacks as a justification for suspending travel and refugee demands; and the mention of Iraqis as dangerous nationals – it still devotes some paragraphs to defend its predecessor (Fullerton, 2017, p. 333-334).

[76] In one famous episode Trump asked a group of lawmakers "[w]hy are we having all these people from shithole countries come here?" "Why do we need more Haitians? Take them out!" (Watkins and Phillip, 2018).

[77] All these documents are explored in more detail in Chapter 4.

Also, contrary to what was promised during his 2016 campaign, Trump sent 4,000 additional extra forces to Afghanistan to fight Taliban (Clarke, 2017); Afghanistan was also attacked with the "Mother of all Bombs," the most powerful nonnuclear bomb of the U.S. arsenal (The New York Times, 2018); his administration deployed military personnel in order to fight the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and announced the killing of its leader, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi (Speckhard and Ellenberg, 2021). In the same vein, under the name of "National Security," Qasem Soleimani, a high official of Iran was assassinated, or, as the official documents say, he was the object of a "targeted killing" (White House, 2020); and Trump called on "[…] all civilized nations to join us in seeking to end the slaughter and bloodshed in Syria" (White House, 2018d).

Within these examples, we can see how, during Trump's administration, the "stranger" and the "alien" remained regarded as those with an essential dissymmetry (Balibar, 2017) – which should be kept far away and, if necessary, defeated and exterminated. In "Making America Great Again!" and in trying to "Keep America Great!," not only was this "foreign/stranger/alien" experienced as different, s/he was also introduced to violent possibilities materialized in the construction of walls, bombardments, detentions and its combination with discourses, institutions, policies and technologies in order to "protect" the USA against "threats" and "invasions" – as if there were, I repeat, an original and legitimate identity and nation to be defended.

After Donald Trump, Joseph Biden took office, in 2021, amidst a turbulent scenario. His administration is still on its course, and it is aiming at reelection in 2024. His first campaign was carried out under slogans such as "Our Best Days Still Lie Ahead," and promises such as to fight a "Battle for the Soul of the Nation," to "Build Back Better" and to "Unite for a Better America" (Biden, 2020). When Biden took office, similarly to Barack Obama, some optimism contrasted the previous years of the Trump administration, for he promised January 21st, 2021 would be "America's day" and "Democracy's Day" (Biden, 2021a, n.p).

Amidst this rhetoric of renewal, if we pay attention to the idea of "terrorism," the Biden administration concern seems to lie on what its often called "domestic terrorism," (Speckhard and Ellenberg, 2021) for, "in agreement with the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security, Biden recognizes the increasing threat of violent far-right extremism, namely white supremacism and white nationalism." (p.

5). Through these lenses, authors like Vedaschi and Graziani (2023) try to reinforce the idea that the core of the Biden administration counterterrorism policies no longer lie in "international terrorism" but on "domestic terrorism."

This scenario is, indeed, related to the January 6, 2021 assault of the Capitol Building, a place considered a "temple of democracy," for it houses the U.S. Congress. This assault was promoted by those who supported then President Donald Trump and named themselves "true Patriots." This group wanted Donald Trump to remain in power and, to do so, they intended to prevent the *Joint Session of Congress* process of certifying the results of the 2020 election, confirming Joseph Biden as the 46th President of the USA (Vedaschi and Graziani, 2023).

As it is possible to observe, the attack on the Capitol Building was immediately qualified as an act of "terrorism," more specifically "domestic terrorism." This definition was repeated not only by the media, but by those who were outraged by this aggression on democracy, including the Committee on Homeland Security of the House of Representatives (Vedaschi and Graziani, 2023), and President Biden himself, who, few hours later of the invasion, declared that "[t]hey weren't protesters. Don't dare call them protesters. They were a riotous mob, insurrectionists, domestic terrorists. It's that basic. It's that simple" (Biden apud NBC, 2021, n.p.).

This way, President Biden, on January 20, 2021, during his inauguration speech, highlighted the preoccupation of confronting and defeating the "rise in political extremism, white supremacy and domestic terrorism" (Biden, 2021a, n.p.). More than that, he reminded his audience that

> […] here we stand, just days after a riotous mob thought they could use violence to silence the will of the people, to stop the work of our democracy, and to drive us from this sacred ground. That did not happen. It will never happen. Not today. Not tomorrow. Not ever. (Biden, 2021a, n.p.)

In this sense, while not trying to directly define what "terrorism" would mean, and offering this proper name as readily comprehensible – as a "no brainer" – this administration seems to rely on the dichotomy also present on the FBI's website that I presented in the last section, that is, *domestic* and *international* "terrorism." By presenting and defending this dichotomy, Biden's administration launched in

June 2021 the *National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism*[78][79] in which "domestic terrorism" is not directly defined, but only presented as a "threat," "both persistent and evolving" (p. 6). Following this scenario, on the *Statement by President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.* which introduces the *National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism*, delivered on June 15, 2021, the concern with "domestic terrorism" appears as follows

> Domestic terrorism – driven by hate, bigotry, and other forms of extremism—is a stain on the soul of America. It goes against everything our country strives for and it poses a direct challenge to our national security, democracy, and unity (Biden, 2021c, n.p.).

It is also important to note that, contrary to the previous administrations, Biden's showed an inclination to keeping small special operations forces on the ground (in places like Syria); withdrawing forces stationed in Afghanistan (Speckhard and Ellenberg, 2021; Thomas, 2021); and recurring to the use of airstrikes to fight ISIS and other groups considered as "terrorists" (Speckhard and Ellenberg, 2021).

I would say that one emblematic episode of the Biden administration's actions regarding "terrorism" is related to the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, which started on May 1st, 2021. This process provided us images of desperate Afghans trying to leave their country in fear of what could happen to them and to their families. I consider it emblematic because it is an illustration of how, through the boundary-political-producing-performances of foreign policy, "the role that the existential threat narrative" –that is, fighting "terrorism" over the last 20 years –

[78] It is important to point out that according to Vedaschi and Graziani (2023), Joe Biden was the first president in the history of the USA to issue a national counterterrorism strategy entirely focused on what is called "domestic terrorism."

[79] This document establishes four pillars in order to counter "domestic terrorism". The first pillar is "[u]nderstand and Share Domestic Terrorism-Related information", meaning it is important that law enforcement, federal departments and intelligence agencies cooperate in order to fight "terrorism.". The second pillar is "[p]revent Domestic Terrorism Recruitment and Mobilization to Violence," meaning it is imperative to work against the spread of disinformation and (online) hate contents, as well as reduce access to assault weapons in order to eradicate adherence to "violent extremism" that lead to acts of "terrorism." The third pillar is "[d]isrupt and Deter Domestic Terrorist Activities," and, to do so, it asks for financial resources to enable and empower agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of Justic (DOJ) and the FBI to have the proper infrastructure to fight "domestic terrorism." Finally, the fourth pillar "[c]onfront Long-Term Contributors to Domestic Terrorism" aims at identifying those who can potentially feed extreme and violent behaviors.

"has had serious long-term consequences on the lives and wellbeing of thousands of individuals and communities" and, notably, made Afghans feel desperate and "terrorized" (Wolfendale, 2016, p. 249).

However, there was not a total disengagement of this administration with regard to fighting "terrorism" abroad, for, as Biden (2021e) pointed out, the USA

> will not be deterred by terrorists. We will not let them stop our mission. […] Here is what you need to know: These ISIS terrorists will not win. We will rescue the Americans who are there. We will get out our Afghan allies out, and our mission will go on. America will not be intimidated. […] As I've said 100 times: Terrorism has metastasized around the world; we have greater threats coming out of other countries a heck of a lot closer to the United States (Biden, 2021e, n.p.).

Accordingly, the Biden administration kept vigilant eyes on "jihadist extremism/ international terrorism." The *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* (2021, p. 8), for example, expressed that "[t]errorism and violent extremism, both domestic and international, remain significant threats." More than that, it promised that the Biden administration would work in order to "disrupt al-Qaeda and related terrorist networks and prevent an ISIS resurgence" (p. 11) and that "in the Middle East, we will right-size our military presence to the level required to disrupt international terrorist networks, deter Iranian aggression, and protect other vital U.S. interests" (p. 15). In so doing, the administration continued to act against "terrorist" groups and cells worldwide through "targeted killings," "extraordinary renditions" as well as through the use of secrecy and surveillance practices (Vedaschi and Graziani, 2023).

In formulating strategies to counter acts of "terrorism," whether of an "international" or "domestic" supposedly nature, and recognizing the global proliferation of this phenomenon, it appears that the specter of "terrorism" continues to haunt the current administration, thereby catalyzing persistent engagements in "Wars on Terrors." On the one hand, it is possible to highlight that despite the substantial allocation of resources to the military, and frequent overseas and local interventions, these administrations manifest a steadfast conviction, that is, they endeavor to portray the USA as an inherently "peace-loving nation," notwithstanding assertions that the nation is prepared to swiftly retaliate against any perceived transgressions (Lutz, 2014, p. 187).

Moreover, within enduring narratives of war, the USA ostensibly projects itself as a reluctant, infrequent, and defensively oriented participant[80]. As articulated by Lutz (2014), the prevailing suggestion made by politicians, the media and the military is that the USA only mobilize in defense when confronted with an "external threat," thus framing the nation's military actions within a defensive and reactive posture.

Much like Albright who invokes a supposed "bipartisan consensus" (Wertheim, 2020), or "military normal" (Lutz, 2014) – that of the U.S. unquestionable manifest destiny and obligation to shape the world – many are those who try to persuade us to acknowledge that the world is composed of "either threats or wards," waiting for the USA to either conquer "them" or guide "them" (Wertheim, 2020, n.p.). This way, we must remain attentive to deceiving presuppositions, that is, those of administrations that claim(ed) not to be fighting "Islam" but allow(ed) for the bombing, invasion, occupation and detention of much of the "Muslim world;" administrations that profess(ed) to embrace all peoples and nations indiscriminately, yet they expel(ed) or detain(ed) those seeking refuge in the USA, alleging that they pose(d) "potential threats;" administrations that claim(ed) to work hard to promote racial, gender, and social equality, yet paradoxically condemne(d) individuals whose public demonstrations supposedly pose(d) a threat to an established "order" or embraced demonstrations which opposed racial, gender and social equality; and so on.

This way, "terrorism" keeps eluding the U.S. security and justifying the elaboration of "National Security Strategies," such as the recent "National Security Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism" of 2021. It also allows for deeper examinations on how the USA advocated and promoted interventions worldwide, promised structural transformations, yet ultimately left countries like Afghanistan and Iraq and their populations in panic; detainees with no hope of freedom; "refugees," "im/migrants," and "asylum seekers" with no hope for shelter; and public demonstrators with no assurance that their demands for a secure and better future would be acknowledged.

[80] "Every invasion, in fact, has been portrayed this way – from the Dominican Republic in 1965, Vietnam in the 1960s, or Panama in 1989" (Lutz, 2014, p. 187).

2.3.2
Declaring "Wars on Terrors"

> You learn a lot from a culture or a society by examining how they talk about, say, whales (but replace whales with taxes, the state, austerity, China: the prevalent signifier of the times), which in turn determines what they do with whales (or taxes or China etc.). Or, to rephrase that in more theoretical terms, discourses are modes of social organization, and they stake out the possibilities for behaving in some ways, and not in others, because they establish which behaviours are considered 'normal' or acceptable and which are not.
>
> Charlotte Epstein (Interview to E-IR, 2017, n.p.).

After making this brief overview about the last four administrations'[81] "Wars on Terrors," I would like to point out that, it is also possible to acknowledge how "terrorism" appeared as a "National threat" in the USA, during the last 20 years, through six "National Security Strategies" that were elaborated, published, and put into action. Before paying attention to them, it is important to note that since 1986, and according to the *Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986*[82], every President of the USA has been required to publish an annual National Security Strategy (NSS)[83] (Doyle, 2007).

Each NSS is elaborated by the Executive Branch and, according to the National Security Strategy Archive (2022, n.p.),

> [it] is intended to be a comprehensive statement articulating the worldwide interests, goals, and objectives of the United States that are important to its security. Among the reporting requirements are those actions needed to deter aggression and to implement the national security strategy.

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[81] It is important to say that this "broad" reading regarding the U.S. actions towards/against "terrorism" will not be the only one done in this dissertation. Rather, in the next chapters, I intend to look at other places, such as the FBI, for it is an institution that remained working/challenging/fighting "terrorism" during the last years, no matter who were the President in office. In this sense, I opted to work with the United States National Security Strategies' in this chapter in order to illustrate my argument and to complement the literature review that has been done so far. In other words, it is just the first step in my attempts to narrow down my attention to the persistent, haunting and eluding security practices regarding "terrorism" in the United States.

[82] To access this document, visit: <history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/dod_reforms/Goldwater-NicholsDoDReordAct1986.pdf>.

[83] Interestingly, according to the National Security Strategy Archive, after 37 years, only 18 NSS have been published. This way, in 1989, 1992, 1999, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2022 we cannot find these specific guidelines regarding National Security. To see more, visit: <https://nssarchive.us/>. Accessed on June 15, 2022.

In other words, not only does this document catalogue national security interests and concerns, it also tries to show how each administration intends to deal with them[84]. It is worth noting, however, that, as per the Council on Foreign Relations, the NSS is "an inherently awkward enterprise" (Patrick, p. 2015, n.p.). For, while it designs a vision of the world the country would seek, and promises the current administration would achieve it, it also works in order to satisfy bureaucratic interests. This way, these documents result in "combining grand aspirations and intentions with an everything-but-the-kitchen-sink list of U.S. interests and initiatives." (2015, n.p.)

To that end, we should bear in mind that during George W. Bush two terms, we can find the National Security Strategies of 2002 and 2006; during Barack Obama two terms, we can find the National Security Strategies of 2010 and 2014; during Donald Trump's one term, we can find the National Security Strategy of 2017; and, finally, during Joseph Biden's current administration, we can find, so far, the National Security Strategy of 2022.

Among the goals established by the NSS of 2002, we could highlight the promises to

> champion aspirations for human dignity; strengthen alliances to defeat global terrorism and work to prevent attacks against us and our friends; work with others to

[84] More specifically, according to the "50 U.S. Code § 3043 - Annual national security strategy report": "(a)Transmittal to Congress: (1) The President shall transmit to Congress each year a comprehensive report on the national security strategy of the United States (hereinafter in this section referred to as a 'national security strategy report'). (2) The national security strategy report for any year shall be transmitted on the date on which the President submits to Congress the budget for the next fiscal year under section 1105 of title 31. (3) Not later than 150 days after the date on which a new President takes office, the President shall transmit to Congress a national security strategy report under this section. That report shall be in addition to the report for that year transmitted at the time specified in paragraph (2). (b) Contents: Each national security strategy report shall set forth the national security strategy of the United States and shall include a comprehensive description and discussion of the following: (1) The worldwide interests, goals, and objectives of the United States that are vital to the national security of the United States. (2) The foreign policy, worldwide commitments, and national defense capabilities of the United States necessary to deter aggression and to implement the national security strategy of the United States. (3) The proposed short-term and long-term uses of the political, economic, military, and other elements of the national power of the United States to protect or promote the interests and achieve the goals and objectives referred to in paragraph (1). (4) The adequacy of the capabilities of the United States to carry out the national security strategy of the United States, including an evaluation of the balance among the capabilities of all elements of the national power of the United States to support the implementation of the national security strategy. (5) Such other information as may be necessary to help inform Congress on matters relating to the national security strategy of the United States. (c) Classified and unclassified form: Each national security strategy report shall be transmitted to Congress in classified form, but may include an unclassified summary."

> defuse regional conflicts; prevent our enemies from threatening us, our allies, and our friends, with weapons of mass destruction (p. 1).

In delineating these goals and in promising to accomplish them, the NSS declares that "National Security begins at home" (p. 31), but that "the events of September 11, 2001, fundamentally changed the context for relations" carried out by the USA (p. 28). In so doing, this NSS blurs –but does not eliminate – the boundaries among domestic and foreign affairs, or, at least, it says that they are diminishing, for, "in a globalized world, events beyond America's borders have a greater impact inside them" (p. 31).

While blurring some boundaries, for the benefit of the U.S. endeavors around the globe, the NSS of 2002 certainly reinforces others. Since its first pages, the document establishes a dichotomy between "nations that share a commitment to protecting basic human rights and guaranteeing political and economic freedom," (p. iii), and those who do not, for they harbor "terrorists" and, in so doing, become allies of "terrorism" (p. iv) and "enemies of civilization" (p. iv). In this sense, it also introduces a dichotomy between freedom and fear, for it declares that "[f]reedom and fear are at war, and there will be no quick or easy end to this conflict" (p. 7). And, in order to reify this dichotomy, it announces that "today, the world's great powers find ourselves in the same side – united […]" (p. iv) against the other side, that is "[…] common dangers of terrorist violence and chaos" (p. iv)

More than that, it states that while the first –free, human, democratic – group would be able to explore the full potential of their population and to make sure their future would be prosperous, the second group would always menace this scenario. This way, it would be the duty of the first group to guarantee the permanence of basic values and to protect "freedom-loving people across the globe" (p. iii) from their enemies.

In so doing, the NSS declares the USA does not seek for any unilateral advantage. On the contrary, the USA would work to "create a balance of power" (p. iii) to help promote a safer, freer world[85]. This way, the NSS announces that it

[85] The NSS of 2002 promises the USA is "[…] guided by the conviction that no nation can build a safer, better world alone." (p. v). For that reason, it would work along with "Alliances and multilateral institutions […] like the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the Organization of American States, and NATO as well as other long-standing alliances. […] (p. v). However, a few pages latter, it contradicts itself, in declaring that "While the United States will

is imperative to "defend the peace by fighting terrorists and tyrants" (p. iii); to hold accountable those nations (*rogue states*)[86] that harbor "terrorism" and "terrorists," located in "North America, South America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and across Asia" (p. v); and to build and preserve good relations worldwide (p. iii). However, while establishing a dichotomy, the NSS also declares the USA intends to transform it, in trying to "extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent" (p. iii).

The NSS of 2002 also emphasizes that the USA holds the task of defending the nation against its enemies. However, it says that this task has changed, for "enemies in the past needed great armies and great industrial capabilities to endanger America," (p. iii) and that now "shadowy networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering," (p. iii) those being "terrorists" that were "seeking weapons of mass destruction" (p. iv) and were "organized to penetrate open societies and to turn the power of modern techonologies against them" (p. iii).

This way, in order to deal with this "different" task, the USA declared, through its NSS of 2002, it would make use "of military power, better homeland defenses, law enforcement, intelligence" (p. iii) as well as of "vigorous efforts to cut off terrorist financing." (p. iii). In so doing, it declares *ipsis litteris* that a "war against terrorists of global reach is a global enterprise of uncertain duration" (p. iii) that would be waged and assisted by the USA.

The document evokes the losses of September 11, 2001 as fundamental in illustrating how massive, tragic civilian casualties were the specific objective of "terrorism" (p. 14). Regarding this scenario, the NSS of 2002 emphasizes that the USA would not stand still "hoping for the best" (p. iv); rather, the USA would be prepared to fight, for it recognized that their "best defense is a good offense" (p. 6). Curiously, the NSS of 2002 declares that "war on terrorism is not a clash of civilizations" (p. 31), but a "clash inside a civilization, a battle for the future of the

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constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community, we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively against such terrorists, to prevent them from doing harm against our people and our country" (p. 6).

[86] The NSS of 2002 defines rogue states as follows: States that "brutalize their own people and squander their national resources for the personal gain of the rulers; display no regard for international law, threaten their neighbors, and callously violate international treaties to which they are party; are determined to acquire weapons of mass destruction, along with other advanced military technology, to be used as threats or offensively to achieve the aggressive designs of these regimes; • sponsor terrorism around the globe; and reject basic human values and hate the United States and everything for which it stands" (p. 14).

Muslim world" (p. 31). In so doing, it seems to declare that there is a monolithic "Muslim civilization," that was, at least for that moment, different from those "freedom-loving, humane and democratic" nations/civilizations, of which the USA was a central part.

Regarding "terrorism", in the NSS of September 2002 this word appears 32 times, and the word "terrorist" appears 47 times. "Terrorism" is defined there as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against innocents." (p. 5). "Terrorists," on the other hand, are defined as "shadowy networks of individuals [that] can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank. Terrorists are organized to penetrate open societies and to turn the power of modern technologies against us" (p. iii); and the war against them is conceived as a war "of global reach is a global enterprise of uncertain duration" (p. iii). According to this NSS, they are located in places such as "North America, South America, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and across Asia" (p. 5).

"Terrorism," in turn, appears as something to be "defeated" by the USA (p. 1), as the "enemy" (p. 5); as something that would "be fought on many fronts against a particularly elusive enemy over an extend period of time" (p. 5); as something "supported by enemies" (p. 5); as something whose "fundings should be blocked" (p. 6); as something that the USA would "wage a war of ideas to win the battle against" (p. 6); as an "illegitimate act" (p. 6); as something as "condemnable" as "slavery" (p. 6); as something that could develop in the "Muslim world" if the USA did not support moderate and modern governments (p. 6); as something to be "defeated" (p. 7); as something promoted and sponsored by "rogue states" (p. 14); and as something the USA, its society and its values were "vulnerable against" (p. 31).

The NSS of 2006, published on March 16, 2006 has a structure that is similar to its predecessor. This way, its goals revolve around two pillars, those being "promoting freedom, justice, and human dignity – working to end tyranny, to promote effective democracies, and to extend prosperity through free and fair trade and wise development policies" and "confronting the challenges of our time by leading a growing community of democracies" (The White House, 2006, n.p.). In so doing, it dedicates its 54 pages to highlight the "successes and challenges since 2002" and to propose "a way ahead."

Its first line declares that “America is at war” (p. i), and that the NSS of 2006 was a “wartime national security strategy” published because of the rise of “terrorism” and committed “to protect the security of the American people” (p. i). According to this document, the dichotomy between “freedom” and “fear” remain, as well as “the choice between the path of fear and the path of confidence” (p. ii). It declares that the USA has chosen the path of confidence and that, in so doing, it was struggling for the survival of freedom and peace across its borders (The White House, 2006).

In order to validate the last years and the U.S. endeavors, the NSS of 2006 declares that the country has been through a good path, inspiring nations, and individuals around the globe, and advancing values such as freedom, justice, and peace in places like the Middle East. It also assures that, even though “terrorism” was not yet defeated, the USA had been fighting and weakening the enemies of their cherished values. This NSS also justifies the U.S. choice to invade Iraq by stating that “[w]e choose leadership over isolationism [...]” (p. 3), that “[w]e choose to deal with challenges now rather than leaving them for future generations” (p. 3) and that “we are fighting alongside Iraqis to secure a united, stable, and democratic Iraq - a new ally in the war on terror” (p. 2).

Beyond resorting to dichotomies characterized by contrasts such as “freedom/fear” and “confidence/fear” – as well as to the ideas of “freedom, justice, and peace” that presuppose “oppression, injustice and war” – the document tries to posit a compelling argument asserting that the USA not only possesses the prerogative but is also obligated to assume a leadership role on behalf of other nations. The document contends that the USA has historically served as an inspirational force, propelling other societies towards the embrace of commendable values, including “justice, peace, and freedom,” particularly within regions such as the “Middle East.”

Consequently, it insinuates that the presence of the USA has been instrumental in the advancement of these virtues, suggesting that were the USA not to be there, these values would have a limited existence, or, even, a complete absence. Furthermore, the document implies that by opting for “leadership over isolationism” (p. 3), the United States not only asserts its legitimacy in global affairs but also purports to possess a distinctive expertise in addressing precarious, unstable, and undemocratic proclivities, particularly in regions such as Iraq. This

nuanced perspective posits the United States as a proactive, legitimate force capable of navigating and ameliorating complex geopolitical challenges, thus positioning itself as a vanguard in fostering democratic ideals as well as stability.

This way, with respect to "terrorism", in the NSS of March 2006, the word appears 28 times. The word "terrorist," in turn, appears 72 times. Apparently, in an attempt to respond to the backlash of Bush's administration first actions in its "War on Terror," first, this NSS defines what "terrorism" is not:

> • Terrorism is not the inevitable by-product of poverty. Many of the September 11 hijackers were from middle-class backgrounds, and many terrorist leaders, like bin Laden, are from privileged upbringings. • Terrorism is not simply a result of hostility to U.S. policy in Iraq. The United States was attacked on September 11 and earlier, well before we toppled the Saddam Hussein regime. Moreover, countries that stayed out of the Iraq war have not been spared from terror attack. • Terrorism is not simply a result of Israeli-Palestinian issues. Al-Qaida plotting for the September 11 attacks began in the 1990s, during an active period in the peace process. • Terrorism is not simply a response to our efforts to prevent terror attacks. The al-Qaida network targeted the United States long before the United States targeted al-Qaida. Indeed, the terrorists are emboldened more by perceptions of weakness than by demonstrations of resolve. Terrorists lure recruits by telling them that we are decadent and easily intimidated and will retreat if attacked (NSS, 2006, p. 10).

Then, the NSS 2006 proceeds to define "Terrorism" as follows:

> The terrorism we confront today springs from: • Political alienation. Transnational terrorists are recruited from people who have no voice in their own government and see no legitimate way to promote change in their own country. Without a stake in the existing order, they are vulnerable to manipulation by those who advocate a perverse vision based on violence and destruction. • Grievances that can be blamed on others. The failures the terrorists feel and see are blamed on others, and on perceived injustices from the recent or sometimes distant past. The terrorists' rhetoric keeps wounds associated with this past fresh and raw, a potent motivation for revenge and terror. • Sub-cultures of conspiracy and misinformation. Terrorists recruit more effectively from populations whose information about the world is contaminated by falsehoods and corrupted by conspiracy theories. The distortions keep alive grievances and filter out facts that would challenge popular prejudices and self-serving propaganda. • An ideology that justifies murder. Terrorism ultimately depends upon the appeal of an ideology that excuses or even glorifies the deliberate killing of innocents. A proud religion – the religion of Islam – has been twisted and made to serve an evil end, as in other times and places other religions have been similarly abused (p. 10).

In the NSS of March 2006, "terrorism" also appears as something "global" (p. 1); as something that should be "countered" (p. 1); as something "sponsored by tyrannies" (p. 3); as something promoted by the Palestinian "Hamas" (p. 5); as

something to be “fought” and “defeated” (p. 8); as something exploited by “transnational terrorists” that “subvert the proud religion of Islam” (p. 9); as something “[d]emocracies are not immune to” (p. 10); as something that threatened the “Iraqi government” (p. 13); as something that could also manifest in the form of “bioterrorism” (p. 19); as “sponsored” by the Iranian regime (p. 18) and Syria (p.20), and that “threatens Israel; seeks to thwart Middle East peace; disrupts democracy in Iraq; and denies the aspirations of its people for freedom” (p. 20); as something that explores “America’s vulnerability” (p. 43), as something that could guide the “mutual interests” and the “cooperation between the USA and China” (p. 41); and as an “irregular challenge” (p. 44).

The NSS of 2010, published on May 27, says, on its first page, that it is focused on “renewing American leadership so that [the USA] can more effectively advance our interests in the 21st century” (p. 1). That would be done by concentrating not only on the U.S. “strength at home” (p. 1), but also by meeting the challenges that menaced the country and by working in order to shape “an international order” (p. 1). On the one hand, the USA would then aim its attention at building and strengthening international alliances, and, on the other hand, it would pursue an unmatched military, economic and democratic power. In so doing, it would “renew” its leadership by “building at home, shaping abroad” (p. 2). More than that, the NSS promises that while the USA fought all the wars that challenged the nation, it would not stop contemplating a horizon that goes beyond them.

Regarding its goals, it is possible to highlight the intention of

> combating violent extremism; stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and securing nuclear materials; achieving balanced and sustainable economic growth; and developing cooperative solutions to the threat of climate change, armed conflict, and pandemic disease. (NSS, 2010, p. 3).

These are the “enemies” of the USA pointed out by the NSS of 2010. They are diffuse – they are “nations, nonstate actors, and failed states” (p. i), such as Al-Qaeda’s affiliates in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In this sense, the NSS appeals to universals, that is, “universal rights” (p. ii) such as “democracy” and “justice,” because, as it is highlighted in this document, only by living and exporting these values, “security” and “prosperity” would be found and guaranteed.

To do so, the NSS of 2010 reaffirms that sometimes it would be necessary to have to resort to the use of force in order "to defend our country and allies or to preserve broader peace and security" (p. 22). For it assumes the USA would be able, to "reverse the spread of nuclear and biological weapons and secure nuclear materials," to promote an "advance in peace, security, and opportunity in the Greater Middle East" (p. 24), to "invest in the capacity of strong and capable partners" (p. 26) and to "secure cyberspace" (p. 27).

With regard to the word "terrorism," this name it appears 23 times; the word "terrorist," 32 times. "Terrorism" is not directly defined in there. However, it appears as a "one of many threats that are more consequential in a global age" (p. 8); as something to be "safe" and "secured from" (p. 15); as something that needs to be "delegitimized" (p. 18); as an "act" that needs to be "prevented" (p. 18); as something "supported" by an irresponsible Iran (p. 18); as a "risk" (p. 36); and as something to be "countered" in the form of "counterterrorism" (p. 14).

Considering the NSS of 2015 belongs to same administration that published the NSS of 2010, it is possible to say that it includes few novelties. Especially because it was published on February 6, just two years before the end of Obama's second term, a moment no administration would choose to change its course abruptly. This is a shorter document – while its predecessors mentioned here so far have 35, 54, and 60 pages, respectively, it only has 29 pages – that echoes the themes of the NSS of 2010.

It is worth pointing out that this NSS emphasizes the idea of "strategic patience and persistence" (p. ii). This way, it focuses on the conception that the U.S. "national security" depends on long-term commitments, such as "efforts to work with other countries to counter the ideology and root causes of violent extremism," (p. ii) for they are considered "more important than our capacity to remove terrorists from the battlefield" (p. ii). To promote its strategic patience and persistence, the NSS delineates "top strategic risks" that would deserve the country's attention, those being:

> Catastrophic attack on the U.S. homeland or critical infrastructure; Threats or attacks against U.S. citizens abroad and our allies; Global economic crisis or widespread economic slowdown; Proliferation and/or use of weapons of mass destruction; Severe global infectious disease outbreaks; Climate change; Major energy market disruptions; and Significant security consequences associated

> with weak or failing states (including mass atrocities, regional spillover, and transnational organized crime." (NSS, 2010, p. 2).

Maintaining its appeals to universal values, the NSS promises to lead the world – with purpose, strength, by example, with capable partners, leveraging their "strategic advantages in diplomacy, development, defense, intelligence, science and technology" (The White House, 2015, n.p.) – toward peace, prosperity, and a rules-based international order (p. 2). In so doing, it delineates specific goals such as: to reinforce the U.S. homeland security; to transition to a sustainable global security posture; to strive for a world without nuclear weapons; to pursue a stable North Africa and Middle East – to name a few.

This way, in presenting dichotomies that place "peace, prosperity, democracy, and responsible actors" on one side, and "terrorism, violent extremisms, violent non-state actors, irresponsible states, and nuclear weapons' irresponsible holders" – such as *Al-Qaeda* and its affiliates in Afghanistan and Pakistan; the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), in Iraq and Syria; and Iran's nuclear program – on the other, this NSS declares that advancing "security" around the globe is an unpostponable and unavoidable endeavor.

Regarding "terrorism," it is interesting to highlight that it appears on this document as a "persistent threat" (p. 9), for "the threat of catastrophic attacks against our homeland by terrorists has diminished but still persists" (p. 9). The NSS of 2015 establishes that the enemies of the USA are located neither in a specific country nor region; rather, that "they range from South Asia through the Middle East and into Africa" (p. 9). This way, a whole subsection is dedicated to explaining how the USA should conduct its actions in order to interrupt this persistence through a sustainable lawful approach "that prioritizes targeted counterterrorism operations" (p. 9) and that avoids "costly, large-scale, ground wars" (p. 9).

In the NSS of May 2015, the word "terrorism" appears 17 times; "terrorist," in turn, is mentioned 20 times. "Terrorism" is also not directly defined in there either. However, it appears as a "challenge" (p. i); as something the USA should be "guarded against" (p. 8); as a "*persistent*" threat (p. 9); something the USA should not be "vulnerable against" (p. 11); as something the USA should "combat" (p. 25); and as something to be "countered" in the form of "counterterrorism" (p. 1).

The NSS of 2017 was published on December 18, during the first year of Donald Trump's administration. It is a self-declared "America First National Security Strategy" (p. 3) that builds on the idea to "restore respect for the United States abroad and renew American confidence at home" (The White House, 2017, n.p.). This NSS seeks support on four pillars, those being: to Protect the homeland, the American people, and the American way of life; to promote American prosperity; to preserve peace through strength; and to advance American influence (p. 4). It is also based on dichotomies that establish that on one side there are those who cherish "individual liberty, the rule of law, a democratic system of government, tolerance, and opportunity for all" (p. 55), and, on the other side, there are those who do not.

In the first page of the document, signed by Donald Trump himself, the NSS pledges to "revitalize the American economy, rebuild our military, defend our borders, protect our sovereignty, and advance our values." (p. i). In so doing, it addresses China and Russia, immigrants, propaganda, coercion, regional dictators, "rogue regimes," porous borders, criminal cartels, WMD, "Jihadist terrorists," "transnational criminal organizations," and unfair trade practices as "dangerous trends" that affect the U.S. position in the world and slow its growth down. This way, it promises to confront all "threats" and "enemies" before they reach the U.S. borders and cause harm to its population, and, at the same time, to seek partnerships with "like-minded states" (p. 19) in order to promote not only economic growth, but also "peace, political stability, and the rule of law" (p. 19).

With regard to "terrorism," this NSS declares that although "terrorists" had taken control of the "Middle East," that administration was already rallying against it and, in so doing, it had crushed the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (p. 1). Also, this NSS promises to target "WMD terrorists" (p. 8); "strengthen border control and immigration policy" (p. 9); "defeat jihadist terrorists" (p. 10); "disrupt terror plots, eliminate safe havens combat radicalization and recruitment in communities, and dismantle transnational criminal organizations" (p. 11); "sever sources of funding" (p. 34); "strengthen fragile states" (p. 39); and to "defeat transnational terrorist organizations" (p. 41). Also, it locates "terrorism" and "terrorists" in the "Middle East," in "Africa," and in "South and Central Asia."

In the NSS of 2017 the word "terrorism" appears only 12 times; "terrorist," however, appears 66 times. "Terrorism" is also not directly defined there either.

Even so, “it” is associated with WMD, and, for that reason, it appears as something to be the target of “counterterrorism operations” aiming at eliminating “WMD specialists, financiers, administrators, and facilitators” (p. 8). It also appears as something the USA and its partners are “targets of” (p. 11); as something the USA should “prevent” (p. 11), for it is associated with “radicalization and recruitment in communities” through the use of “violent ideologies” (p. 11); as something “sponsored around the world” by the Iranian regime (p. 26); as something that should be “countered” by Pakistan and Central Asian States (p. 50); and as a “cross-border” phenomenon (p. 50).

Finally, the NSS of 2022 was issued on 7 October. It also builds on broad dichotomies: on the one hand, there are those like the USA, who pursue a “free, open, prosperous, and secure” world (p. 2); on the other hand, there are those “recklessly flouting the basic laws of the international order” (p. 8), that is, “powers that layer authoritarian governance with a revisionist foreign policy” (p. 8). This way, the document declares it is focused on outcompeting strategic competitors (like the People’s Republic of China) “while constraining a dangerous Russia” (The White House, 2022, n.p.); dealing with shared challenges; shaping the rules of the road taken by the USA; and protecting the “security” of Americans as well as the “American way of life.”

Additionally, cross-border challenges such as climate change, food insecurity, diseases, inflation, and “terrorism” (p. 6) appear as threats that make people from all over the world struggle and suffer. This way, this NSS declares that the Biden administration pays attention to “the dividing line between domestic and foreign policy,” meaning their “strength at home and abroad are inextricably linked” (p. 11). In this sense, cross-border challenges would represent a matter of inter/national security.

It is important to highlight that this document points that both “domestic terrorism” and “international terrorist groups” are serious, *imminent* threats that need to be handled by “federal, state, territorial, tribal, and nonprofit partners” (p. 31). More specifically, it dedicates two out of its 48 pages to “terrorism” and, in so doing, it reaffirms the *National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism* of 2021 directives (p. 31). More than that, it commits to the implementation of the four pillars presented in the previous document (see subsection 2.3.1). It is important to note, however that the NSS of 2022 highlights that “terrorism” across borders still

represents a "danger" to the United States and to its interests abroad (Vedaschi and Graziani, 2023).

In the NSS of 2022 the word "terrorism" appears only 14 times, and "terrorist" 23 times. More specifically, "terrorism" has no direct and closed definition in there as well. However, the word appears as a "challenge that crosses borders" (p. 6) and that makes "people all over the world" struggle with (p.6). It appears as something promoted by "nefarious actors" (p. 10); as a "threat" among many others that "often emerge or accelerate due to deeper development challenges, and once they do, they do not recognize national borders." (p. 19); and as a "threat" that is "more ideologically diverse and geographically diffuse than that of two decades ago" (p. 30). It is associated to "Al-Qa'ida, ISIS" (p. 30) as well as with forces that "have expanded from Afghanistan and the Middle East into Africa and Southeast Asia" (p. 30). It is located also in "Syria and Yemen" (p. 30) and appears as a "full spectrum of threats" faced by the USA during the 21st century (p. 30); as something that must be "countered" (p. 30); and also, as a "domestic" threat (p. 31).

Interestingly, all NSS presented here seem to focus on the idea that "terrorism" could be linked to poverty – they present this point differently, though[87]. Also, it is possible to say that all these NSS declare that the USA was, has been, and is *persistently* threatened by the rise of "terrorism," but they do not clarify if "terrorism" means/is an "aggressive ideology," the "enemy," a "tactic" used by the "enemy," or a "political movement"… or some-*thing* else.

Rather, while there is no single direction, "terrorism" appears as self-evident, that is, as an already-known name, a no-brainer which we should be ready to accept and unwilling to question. In this sense, while observing these varying attempts to define a word that eludes closure, I understand that the U.S. "source of danger has

[87] The NSS of 2002 issued by the Bush administration say that "Poverty does not make poor people into terrorists and murderers. Yet poverty, weak institutions, and corruption can make weak states vulnerable to terrorist networks and drug cartels within their borders. (2002, p. 2). However, in 2006, apparently, in an attempt to respond to the backlash of the government's actions in its "War on Terror," the NSS declares that "Terrorism is not the inevitable by-product of poverty. Many of the September 11 hijackers were from middle-class backgrounds, and many terrorist leaders, like bin Laden, are from privileged upbringings." (NSS of 2006, p. 14). The Obama administration seems to follow the same tone of the NSS of 2002, by saying that "We will work to address the underlying conditions that can help foster violent extremism such as poverty, inequality, and repression. (NSS of 2015, p. 8). The Trump administration goes on a similar tone, by stating that "Terrorists and criminals thrive where governments are weak, corruption is rampant, and faith in government institutions is low." (NSS of 2017, p. 45). Finally, the Biden administration NSS says that "transnational threats, in turn, undermine development, fuel poverty and human suffering, and feed a vicious circle" (NSS of 2022, p. 19).

never been fixed," for the contours of "terrorism" keep being the subject of constant trans-formation and re-writing – "not rewriting in the sense of changing the meaning, but rewriting in the sense of inscribing something so that that which is contingent and subject to flux is rendered more permanent" (Campbell, 1998, p. 31).

Having these scenarios in mind, one may wonder: How is it possible that the USA keeps fighting something that threatens its "National Security," but that is not, most of the time, defined categorically by its "National Security Strategies?" This is a puzzling question and that is why I believe we must remain attentive to promises of unity, coherence, and order. In this sense, and with this hope, I believe that the contributions of Jacques Derrida and Reinhart Koselleck, presented in the next sections might help me shed light on these doubts on the chapters to come.

Lastly, and before starting the next section, I would like to highlight that, while questioning this constant re-writing and these *persistent* and violent "Wars on Terrors," I have no doubt that the USA has also been victims of violence. But, just as Butler (2004) emphasizes: it is one thing to be a victim of violence and another completely different to use this framework to undertake unlimited aggression against targets that may or may not be directly related to the source of suffering. Also, still according to Butler, "I do not mean that the story of being attacked should not be told. I do not mean that the story that begins with September 11 should not be told. These stories have to be told, and they are being told […]" (2004, p. 7). On the contrary, I believe it is necessary to recognize the weight and the power of rhetorical re-writings behind definitions that have political and violent force.

2. 4
De-centering "Terrorism"

In modern discourses, there is this premise that discursive representations are self-evident, coherent and can be readily replicated. This dynamic allows for the emergence of those who call themselves capable of interpreting ambiguous circumstances. In so doing, they impose meanings and, consequently, discipline and silence voices of resistance and (re)produce historical amnesias (Ashley, 1989). This happens because modern dynamics allow for the (re)production of boundaries,

borders and limits (Walker, 2009; Lindahl, 2013) that, in turn, help in dictating the know-how and, still, in making all these aspects truths recognized as familiar and natural. Contrary to that, through a "poststructural" gaze it is possible to understand that we are not able to identify boundaries, borders and limits, but to trace its effects. For, as James Williams (2005) put it: "Poststructuralists trace the effects of a limit defined as difference" (p. 3).

It is important to highlight that, in this reading, "difference" cannot be understood as "the way in which two people or things are not like each other" or as "difference between A and B" (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 2022, n.p.), for here "difference" is not taken as something that takes place between identifiable things, but as something ungraspable, open for variations. In this sense,

> The work of the limit is to open up the core and to change our sense of its role as stable truth and value. What if life took on different patterns? What if our settled truths were otherwise? How can we make things different? This definition of the limit [can be understood] as something open and ungraspable – except through its traces or expressions in more fixed forms of knowledge" (Williams, 2005, p. 3).

In this sense, here I am actively engaged with a critical examination that delves into the inherent arbitrariness present in discursive constructions. In so doing, I aspire to go beyond mere exploration; my goal is to illuminate the intricate interplay among practices, powers, and knowledge within the political domain (Edkins, 1999). This dissertation further seeks the dis-placement – dis-location, de-stabilization, dis-orientation, and de-centering – of asymmetrical counterconcepts (Koselleck 2004, 2018; Yamato, 2018; Derrida, 1988), notably challenging prevailing notions like "terrorism" and the "War on Terror." My emphasis lies not on unveiling concealed causality or hidden dimensions, nor on identifying simplistic solutions. Instead, I work from within, employing a deconstructive reading, to challenge exclusive assertions of purity, righteousness, and truth (Williams, 2005, p. 23).

In this vein, the point is to acknowledge and expose the density, power dynamics, and violence inherent in discursive (re)productions – i.e., *interpreting interpretations more than interpreting things*. Additionally, the focus lies on comprehending how narratives, language, and practices – discourses – employ and rely upon potent and contentious taxonomies. Consequently, the "poststructural"

gaze and insights drawn from the works of Jacques Derrida and Reinhart Koselleck provide guidance and support along this trajectory.

Before presenting these contributions, it is important to highlight that, as Campbell (1998) puts it, it is problematic to argue that in "poststructuralists'" writings "the discursive has priority over the non-discursive." Suggesting that means an adherence, which is not innocent, to formulations like "if discourse is all there is…," "if everything is language…," or "if there is no reality…" (p. 5).

Those who say so, unreservedly accept that it is possible to separate the "discursive" and "non-discursive/material." In this sense, this is not an innocent claim because it understates many years of debates about language, understanding, interpretation and *inter*textuality in social sciences (Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams, 2015). Defending the distinction between the "discursive" and the "material" represents, then, an attempt of "true believers" to banish the work of "heretics" (Campbell, 1998; Aradau, Huysmans, Neal and Voelkner, 2015).

This way, here, the material and the discursive are considered to intertwine and not to have priority over each other (Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams, 2015). Also, here, the discursive is considered to be performative (Aradau, Huysmans, Neal, and Voelkner, 2015; Bialasiewicz et al., 2007), because discourses delineate how identities can be constructed and (re)produced (Vaughan-Williams, 2009), and because discourses work through a process of

> boundary-drawing around the "self" in opposition to an "other." And yet this boundary-drawing is never achieved once and for all, it's a performance that constantly requires being reiterated. It is one of the crucial political functions of foreign policy, as our critical security scholars have shown. And, crucially, the "other" – who gets to be the other, or who is unlucky enough to be the other –, and correspondingly, the "self," changes at key moments (Epstein, 2017, n.p.).

I should also remind the reader that, by following Ashley and Walker (1990), I resort to an approach that opts to *resist* –without dismissing – the celebration of modern culture. For, in modern culture, "knowledge" works as a tool to construct "coherent representations" that automatically exclude interpretations that challenge them. Consequently, in my resistance to, yet acknowledgment of, dominant perspectives on "terrorism" and "the War on Terror," my analytical approach consistently embraces a double movement, a twofold reading (Ashley, 1988).

Meaning that prior to delving into critique I diligently attend to the proffered claims of the U.S. *textiles*, scrutinizing what they purport to offer, defend, or define. For I understand that a meticulous preliminary examination serves as a prerequisite for contemplating vulnerabilities and the dangerousness of ready to hand explanations. More than that, I consider this move as an important part of a deconstructive reading. This way, by engaging in this double movement, my aim is not only to unravel the limitations inherent in prevailing narratives but also to undertake a path that extends beyond immediate critiques, fostering a nuanced appreciation of the intricate interplay between knowledge construction, cultural celebrations, and the perpetuation of dominant understandings (Ashley, 1988, 1989).

Also, in following Ashley (1989) and Derrida (1978), here I understand that this approach is not entirely situated outside *or* entirely within the regime of modernity. It is not entirely situated within modernity for it does not intend to imitate logocentric practices and, much less, to establish absolute bases and monological[88] interpretations. It does not work entirely outside modernity, on the other hand, for not exhibiting a totalizing position of denial. In other words, this approach is not concerned with invoking the idealization of a universe in which human conduct would be completely free and independent of discursive structures. In this sense, here, we are "living on border lines." (Ashley, 1989, p. 272).

Therefore, similarly to the aforementioned authors, I am inclined to doubt universal *textiles* that seek transcendental ends. And that is the case of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors." This way, as Ashley and Walker (1990), this dissertation celebrates

> […] a readiness to question how meaning and order are imposed, not the search for a source of meaning and order already in place; the unrelenting and meticulous analysis of the workings in power in modern global life, not the longing for a sovereign figure (be it man, God, nation, state, paradigm, or research program), that promises a deliverance from power; the struggle for freedom, not a religious desire to produce some territorial domicile of self-evident being that men of innocent faith call home (Ashley and Walker, 1990, p. 265).

[88] A monological reading understands the complexity of an event/phenomenon as a given text ready to be interpreted in its own terms (Ashley, 1989, p. 263).

Therefore, I pay attention to the way modes of subjectivity and objectivity have been reaffirmed on a large scale, that is, under the flag of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors." And, despite the distrust in the search for final causes (of *why* questions), in working through a "poststructural gaze," I believe it is possible to observe effects of continuity. This way, in the subsequent pages, I contend that a deconstructive reading allows us to observe how *iterability*, *différance, supplementarity, spectrality*, *asymmetry* and *structural iterability* are continuously on the move (Derrida; 1978; Koselleck, 2004, 2018).

In this sense, while addressing the question mentioned in section 2.3[89], as well as the question that guides this research[90], I emphasize that nothing is, was, or will remain intact. On the contrary, fragmentation and dis-placement are actively unfolding – i.e., the "Wars on Terrors" are in the process of becoming, as "terrorism" undergoes a constant process of (un)becoming, persistently eluding any attempts of a definitive, closed definition.

In so doing, then, I also set aside any "readiness to conceive foreign policy as action on the part of pregiven actors who have well-defined competencies and who respect pregiven boundaries of social and political action" (Ashley, 1987, p. 53). Instead, following a different path, I intend to de-center conventionally invoked understandings of foreign policy and to consider it a "performance that would impose an interpretation of the world and thereby effect the structuring of social existence" (p. 53). This way, in the upcoming sections, I demonstrate how Derrida and Koselleck can help me in this endeavor.

2.4.1
Derrida, Deconstruction, Iterability, *Différance*, Supplement

As I pointed out before, one of the interests of my research is tied to the (Derridean) idea of deconstruction, a "concept" first presented by Jacques Derrida in *Of Grammatology* (2016 [1967]). And, as we know, the contributions of Derrida, as well as the idea of deconstruction are almost immediately associated with the label of "poststructuralism," at least in the Anglo-Saxon discipline of IR. Although

[89] How is it possible that the USA keeps fighting something that threatens its "National Security," but that is not, most of the time, defined categorically by its National Security Strategies?
[90] What is it about the "War on Terror" that provides a persistent narrative that keeps structuring the terms of the US foreign policy during the 21st century?

I would not be able to synthesize Derrida's whole contribution, I could say that, according to Facó (2022, n.p., my translation), "Derrida is an elusive, slippery, marginal thinker,"[91] someone whose work dismantle systems and set things in motion.

Engaging with Derrida's work allows me to understand that deconstruction is related to the idea of recognizing the density of discursive constructions and illustrating how narratives, languages and practices – discourses – resort to/rely upon powerful, violent, and controversial taxonomies (Shapiro, 1989). This way, the goal of deconstruction is taken here as that of "to illuminate, rather than to pretend to eliminate, the textual nature of the differences that produce and are sustained by international relations […]" (Der Derian, 1989, p. 5). That is, the goal is to read and to question privileged, naturalized, and neutralized ways of representation that constantly attempt to lead to the standardization of subjects and objects.

Therefore, in Derrida's deconstructive contributions lie the possibility to deal with ideas and questions that can *overturn*, *displace* and *de-center* traditional perceptions of the world we have been taking for granted (Derrida, 1988). Accordingly, this may result in a more profound comprehension of pre-existing knowledge, accompanied by the emergence of novel insights (Royle, 2003). This way, paying attention to the way the USA wages wars against "terrorism" is only one among countless possibilities of deconstruction.

Certainly, *deconstruction* is a well-known word. It is not a *key*word, a "concept" that could be separated from other ideas presented by Derrida, though[92]. Rather, it is a *quasi-concept*, that is, a name inscribed in a chain of possible substitutions and endless remittances (Duque-Estrada, 2020). In other words,

[91] These words were said during a lecture on Jacques Derrida. To watch the whole lecture, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxHT6v8H3Zc&t=9322s>.

[92] Throughout Derrida's writings it is possible to observe that neither does he separate, nor does he close the meaning of ideas such as deconstruction, iterability, *différance*, supplementarity, spectrality, and so on. On the contrary, all these words are inscribed in a chain of possible substitutions. As he wrote in *Letter to a Japanese Friend*, "[t]he word 'deconstruction,' like all other words, acquires its value only from its inscription in a chain of possible substitutions, in what is too blithely called a 'context.' For me, for what I have tried and still try to write, the word has interest only within a certain context, where it replaces and lets itself be determined by such other words as 'écriture,' 'trace,' 'différance,' 'supplément,' 'hymen,' 'pharmakon,' 'marge,' 'entame,' 'parergon,' etc." (1985, p. 4)

deconstruction is a *quasi-concept* because it "does not allow a precise, clear, and distinct definition, a decidability" (Haddock-Lobo, 2011, p. 49, my translation)[93].

As Royle (2003) points out, deconstruction directly interferes with solid structures of institutions. However, differently from notions that sustain that deconstruction would be a movement of inevitable destruction, we can see deconstruction as setting things in motion (Facó, 2022). And even though we cannot find closed definitions of deconstruction, we can come across some clues to what we may be referring to when invoking this name:

> Deconstruction: (in literature and philosophy) a theory that states that it is impossible for a text to have one fixed meaning, and emphasizes the role of the reader in the production of meaning (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 2023, n.p.).

> deconstruction n. Not what you think: the experience of the impossible: what remains to be thought: a logic of destabilization always already on the move in "things themselves": what makes every identity at once itself and different from itself: a logic of spectrality: a theoretical and practical parasitism or virology: what is happening today in what is called society, politics, diplomacy, economics, historical reality, and so on: the opening of the future itself (Royle, 2000, p. 11).

> The movements of deconstruction are not interested in [*solliciter*] structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, they cannot take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them in a certain way, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from within, borrowing from the old structure all the strategic and economic resources of subversion, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being able to isolate their elements and atoms, the enterprise of deconstruction is always in a certain way defeated by its own work (Derrida, Of Grammatology, 2016, p. 168).

> Deconstruction takes place, it is an event that does not await the deliberation, consciousness, or organization of a subject, or even of modernity (Derrida, Letter to a Japanese Friend, 2008, p. 4).

> What deconstruction is not? Everything of course! What is deconstruction? Nothing, of course! (Derrida, Letter to a Japanese Friend, 2008, p. 6).

Derrida (2008) reminds us, in *A Letter to a Japanese Friend*, that when he come out with this word – or it, somehow, came to him – he did not think "deconstruction" would acquire such a pivotal significance. Rather, he shows that, initially, he aimed at both adapting and translating *Destruktion* and *Abbau*, which

[93] In the original: "[…] por não permitir uma definição precisa, clara e distinta, uma decidibilidade." (Haddock-Lobo, 2011, p. 49).

come from Heidegger's work. These two words refer to what Derrida calls the *structure* or the *architecture* of fundamental ontologies of Western thought. However, due to the connotations of "destruction," both in French and English, implying a potentially negative and annihilative process (2008, p. 2), Derrida sought alternative linguistic expressions. Consequently, he chanced upon the term "*déconstruction*"[94], a relatively uncommon term in French, and chose to adopt it[95].

Derrida, himself, explains that

> [t]he "deconstruction" that I attempt or that tempts me is not only distinct […] from the one practiced by Heidegger. First and foremost, it never took the objectifying form of a knowledge as "diagnosis," and even less of a "diagnosis of a diagnosis," since it has always been, and has always acknowledged itself to be inscribed, undertaken, and understood in the very element of the language it calls into question, struggling at the heart of metaphysical debates that are themselves in the grips of autodeconstructive movements. Hence I never associated the theme of deconstruction with the themes that were constantly being brought up […], themes of "diagnosis," of "after" or "post," of "death" […], of "completion" or of "surpassing" […] of the "end." One will find no trace of such a vocabulary in any of my texts. This is not fortuitous, as you might well believe, and it is not without enormous consequence. It is not fortuitous that, as early as *Of Grammatology* (1965), I explicitly declared that it was not a question of the end of metaphysics and that the closure was certainly not the end. And such a closure, I very quickly clarified, did not surround or enclose something like "Metaphysics" in general and in the singular but instead traversed its heterogeneous space following a grid of complex and noncircular limits (Derrida, 2005, p. 173-174)

This way, even though it is difficult to encapsulate Derrida's contributions *in a nutshell*, the author himself said that "it is not that bad that we try to encapsulate Deconstruction *in a nutshell*" (Derrida in Caputo, 1997, p. 16 *apud* Zehfuss, 2009, p. 139) – and that is what I have been trying to do here. This way, and with regard

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[94] "I remember having looked to see if the word *déconstruction* (which came to me it seemed quite spontaneously) was good French. I found it in *Littré*. The grammatical, linguistic, or rhetorical senses [*portées*] were, I found, bound up with a "mechanical" sense [*portée* "machinique"]. This association appeared very fortunate and fortunately adapted to what I wanted at least to suggest. Perhaps I could cite some of the entries from *Littré*. "*Déconstruction*: Action of deconstructing. / Grammatical term. Disarranging of the construction of words in a sentence. 'Of deconstruction, common way of saying construction,' Lemare, *'De la manière d'apprendre les langues* [On the Way of Learning Languages],' chapter 17 of *Cours de langue latine*. *To deconstruct*: i. To disassemble the parts of a whole. To deconstruct a machine to transport it elsewhere. 2. Grammatical term . . . To deconstruct verse, rendering it, by the suppression of meter, similar to prose. /Absolutely. 'In the system of prenotional sentences, one also starts with translation and one of its advantages is never needing to deconstruct,' Lemare, ibid. 3. *To self-deconstruct* [*se déconstruire*: . . . to lose its construction. 'Modern scholarship has shown us that in a region of the timeless East, a language reaching its own state of perfection is deconstructed [*s'est déconstruite*] and altered from within itself according to the single law of change, natural to the human mind,' Villemain, Preface to the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*" (Derrida, 2008, p. 2-3).

[95] It is imperative to bear in mind, however, Derrida's acknowledgment that "this word, at least on its own, has never appeared satisfactory to me (but what word is?) and must always be girded by an entire discourse" (Derrida, 2008, p. 3).

to the previous clues about deconstruction I reunited in this dissertation, I understand that deconstruction's concerns lie in overturning and displacing rigid structures, which results in the exposition, of something more/ something beyond what they supposedly propose (Derrida, 1978; 1981; 1988; 2008; 2016).

After this double move, deconstruction de-centers (interferes in) the way we conceive the world and introduces the possibility of mistrusting and shaking proper names – we could think about "Terrorism;" "September 11;" "War on Terror;" "Foreign Policy," "the United States," "Democracy," etc. – for all of them could be subject to fission. This way, deconstruction shakes up aesthetic, ethical, historical, social, political, and religious supposed grounds (Bass, 1978; Vaughan-Williams, 2005).

Also, according to Maja Zehfuss (2004), Derrida's contribution is "as simple as it is subversive" (p. 196): it both alters our understanding of the "real" and challenges the hierarchical relationship between "reality" and "representation." This subversive contribution suggests that even if there were an "objective, present reality," we could only access it through "representations" which are far from neutral. This way, we may acknowledge that there is a *politics of reality* at play – a politics which attempts to dictate what is deemed possible and what is not.

Accordingly, Hirst (2015) argues that deconstruction has a *radical potential of resistance*, since it intervenes at the levels of conscious and unconscious processes of subject-(re)production. In so doing, it does not represent a debilitating, political moment. Rather, its effects are salutary, for it is interminable and insists that no assumption, claim or principle should be taken as given or unproblematic, no matter how honorable it may look. Under those circumstances, it is clear that deconstruction would not work without the structures it deals with (Duque-Estrada, 2020). That is why it does not make sense to "simply" transgress when we need to work from within (Derrida, 1988; Ashley, 1989).

Deconstruction, this way, encourages us to think carefully about the notion of the *center*, for its aim is to *de-center* (Royle, 2003; Derrida, 1966). That is not to suggest that the center is not important, since thinking about an "unorganized" structure, a structure without a center, would be impossible and unthinkable (Derrida, 1978). Rather, the concern lies in reading – overturning, displacing – and decentering it. And how can we do it? In drawing attention to institutions, authority, the human subject, and so on (Derrida, 1966, p. 230). And, in the case of this

dissertation, in de-centering the idea of a "War on Terror" by proposing that we think of "Wars on Terrors."

With this perspective in mind, through deconstruction we can contemplate discourses not as merely neutral. Rather discourses, such as those of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors," must be acknowledged as ontico-ontological instantiations intimately entangled with the politics of reality (Campbell, 1998; Zehfuss, 2004). In this sense, we can understand that each discourse offers a plot, draws arbitrary boundaries, borders and limits, and make us forget what is/was left out (Vaughan Williams, 2005, 2009; Walker, 2009; Lindahl, 2013; Zehfuss, 2003, 2004, 2009). As a consequence,

> Gaps are filled. The narrative itself cultivates continuity, coherency, and meaning in place of the fantasies of emptiness, need, and frustrated desire that inhabit our nightmares about the destructive power of time […] We try to make sense of the nonsensical: of '9/11'; of a lottery win; of someone telling us that they love us but cannot be with us. When we realize we are not able to make sense of these happenings we create narratives. (Vaughan-Williams, 2005, p. 122).

Certainly, the content of discourses can be (and constantly is) presented as free from gray areas, complexities, and doubts in relation to the answer to be given to challenges and opportunities. Deconstruction, on the other hand, helps us to conceive such discourses as complex, gray, non-linear, rhizomatic, disruptive, and disorienting. Causal connections are put into question. Therefore, it is important to consider what is being left out, or put aside, in analysis and representations, for "the silences and exclusions may tell us most about what is accepted as given or central" (Zehfuss, 2009, p. 142). This way, discourses (re)signify the world and the world (re)signifies them as well.

It is important to underline, once again, that in this dissertation, I follow Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams (2015) in challenging the idea that "*poststructuralisms*" and "deconstruction" would be, in some way, exclusively concerned with the linguistic realm, leaving no place to materiality. As these authors show, if we pay careful attention to Derrida's work, it is possible to see how he "negotiates, problematises and ultimately deconstructs the language/materiality binary while maintaining both as part of a complex and radical intertextuality" (Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams, 2015, p. 7).

And how would that be possible? According to Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams (2015), Derrida works with the ideas of "generalised text," "text" and "intertextuality," and, in so doing, he tries "to think *matter* outside the oppositions that have imprisoned it" (p. 22) by not limiting these notions to "the graphic, nor to the book . . . and even less to the semantic, representational, symbolic, ideal, or ideological sphere" (p. 22). In this sense,

> To do so would be to continue to set the textual "against the social, the political, and the historical, as if it were still the book on the bookshelf of the library." Instead, the concept of the generalised text opens up his analysis of *différance* – the endlessly differing and deferring nature of meaning in chains of signification – across those artificial divides. As Derrida states categorically in the "Afterword" of Limited Inc: "What I call 'text' implies all the structures called 'real', 'economic', 'historical', 'socio-institutional', in short: all possible referents" (Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams, 2015, p. 22).

This way, it is possible to understand that the "generalised text," the "text" and "intertextuality" are not understood here as something imprisoned exclusively in a linguistic structure; rather, we can think these notions in terms of "a field of forces that slices through the language/materiality divide" (Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams, 2015, p. 22) in a way that it becomes impossible to identify clear distinctions. Also, as the authors highlight, this understanding is significant for political analysis in IR, for it allows us to think the way identities, meanings and subjectivities are everlastingly constituted through the use of force (2015, p. 23).

Boundary-producing-political-performances – i.e. foreign policy – operate here: they offer "real" concerns and draw attention to supposedly static, neutral, present boundaries, borders and limits (Campbell, 1998; Vaughan-Williams, 2009; Walker, 2009; Lindahl, 2013; Zehfuss, 2003, 2004). That is why deconstruction is welcomed here, as it directs our attention to (de)politicizing moments (Zehfuss, 2004, p. 196-197).

In this sense, while thinking about "Wars on Terrors," I resort to a deconstructive reading. Or, if we are to consider that "deconstruction takes place" (Derrida, 2008, p. 4), I could say that in this dissertation I observe how deconstruction has been taking place in the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" generalized text. Either way, through this move, I am concerned with the with the *politics of origins*, the *politics of forgetting*, the *politics of teleology*, and the *politics of reality*.

These politics erase and/or attempt to familiarize what should be rendered unfamiliar; make us forget what should come to our attention; propose we orient our thinking towards a *telos* (end, purpose); and offer as "real" what could only be regarded as a representation (Zehfuss, 2003; 2004; 2009; Royle, 2003).

These politics are intimately tied to the way Western thought is structured – that is, to a metaphysics of presence which relies on dichotomies through which we conceive the world (Derrida, 1988). In this sense, because of the privilege of a *metaphysics of presence*, we conceive some concepts to be hierarchically opposed and mutually exclusive, such as: presence/absence; identity/difference; write/speech; inside/outside; here/there; democratic/autocratic; human/terrorist; security/terrorism. As such, we are prompt to conceive that something is *either* X *or* Y. In this vein, "[o]ur thinking is based on the value of presence: we 'show', 'reveal', 'make clear'. It is based on foundations, origins, or some kind of 'presence' at the root of things." (Zehfuss, 2009, p. 140). However, as Derrida (1988) puts it, these dichotomies are significantly problematic, because the first term os this pair is more privileged than the second – a dynamics that allows for the existence violent hierarchies[96].

Also, deconstruction helps us understand how speech is privileged at the expense of writing, which is considered a derivation of the first (Derrida, 1988). That is why Derrida talks about *logocentrism* – which derives from the Greek word *logos* and indicates how speech, logics, reason, and the word of God are treated as central. In other words, logocentrism privileges the *presence* – primacy – of those who speak at the expense of the *absence* –secondary, inferior position – of what is written. However, Derrida argues that, regarding these oppositions, there can be no effective transgression of closure. Rather, it would be impossible since metaphysics of presence is intimately tied to logocentrism: "[o]ne is never installed within transgression; one never lives elsewhere. Transgression implies that the limit is always at work" (Derrida, 1988, p. 12).

Instead, as Derrida puts it, a deconstructive move implies

[96] According to Santiago (1976, p. 47), through Derrida's writings we can understand that hierarchies work in a system of power. More specifically, hierarchies are the condition of possibility of – and exist because of – systems of power. In this sense, a hierarchy is intimately attached to pre-judgments, to a relationship of gradual values, and to the idea of presence – to the metaphysics of presence.

> we must traverse a phase of *overturning*. To do justice to this necessity to recognize that in classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a *vis-à-vis*, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to *overturn* the hierarchy at a given moment. To overlook this phase of overturning is to forget the conflictual and subordinating structure of opposition. Therefore, one might proceed too quickly to a *neutralization* that *in practice* would leave the previous field untouched, leaving one no hold on the previous *opposition*, thereby preventing any means of intervening in the field effectively. We know what always have been the *practical* (particularly *political)* effects of *Immediately* jumping *beyond* oppositions, and of protests in the simple form of *neither* this *nor* that. When I say that this phase is necessary, the word *phase* is perhaps not the most rigorous one. It is not a question of a chronological phase, a given moment, or a page that one day simply will be turned, in order to go on to other things. The necessity of this phase is structural; it is the necessity of an interminable analysis: the hierarchy of dual oppositions always reestablishes itself. Unlike those authors whose death does not await their demise, the time for overturning is never a dead letter. That being said-and on the other hand-to remain in this phase is still to operate on the terrain of and from within the deconstructed system […] By means of this double, and precisely stratified, dislodged and dislodging, writing, we must also mark the interval between inversion, which brings low what was high, and the irruptive emergence of a new "concept," a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime. If this interval, this biface or biphase, can be inscribed only in a bifurcated writing (and this holds first of all for a new concept of writing, that *simultaneously* provokes the *overturning* of the hierarchy speech/writing, and the entire system attached to it, *and* releases the dissonance of a writing within speech, thereby disorganizing *the* entire inherited order and invading the entire field), then it can only be marked in what I would call a *grouped* textual field: in the last analysis it is impossible to *point it* out, for a unilinear text, or a punctual *position*, I an operation signed by a single author, are all by definition incapable of practicing this interval (Derrida, 1988, p. 41-42).

In this sense, as already explained, deconstruction works from within – with elements internal to the discourse – to the generalized text, the *textile* –, and it is a form of immanent critique that exposes the fragility and the contradictions of hierarchical oppositions (Yamato, 2020). This way, by paying attention to the continuous process of negotiation between competing representations, a deconstructive reading does not intend to pursue the true, natural, original meaning; rather, it aims at the interrogation of these competing representations that are constantly producing meaning (Turner, 2016).

Therefore, deconstruction is not a "method" (Derrida, 2008, p. 4) and it cannot become one, for it is not applied to test a hypothesis (Thoibisan, 2019). Rather, it defies institutionalization (Turner, 2016). However, it can be considered a *thinking style* marked by the attention it provides to the singularity of each

question (Rodrigues, 2016, p. 63), an "an ongoing process of interrogation concerned with the structure of meaning itself. When seen in these terms, it is not a method but simply a way of reading, writing, thinking, and acting." (Turner, 2016, n.p.). This way, through a deconstructive reading, it is possible to illustrate how, within a *generalized text*, opposition poles are created that privilege "realities" and legitimize violence. And yet, through this *thinking style*, it is possible to *overturn, displace* and to *de-center* orthodox meanings of a discourse and to demonstrate how their stability claims' lacks strength and could have been read differently.

Through Derrida's work, it is possible to understand that "language eludes clarity and precision" because "every word has its own meaning, or meanings. But it also brings with itself a larger or smaller number of obscure connotations" (Strathern, 2002, n.p.). This way, it is important to highlight another idea presented by him, and that walks hand in hand with deconstruction: *iterability*. Put simply, this *quasi*-concept derives from the Sanskrit word *itara,* or the "other" (Derrida, 1988, p. 7), and refers to the possibility of the "sign" – the "signifier" and the "signified" – always being/invoking another thing in its sameness, that is, to its possibility of being repeated while being transformed.

Paradoxically, iterability implies the possibility of *a repetition that disrupts a given context*, for contexts are always open and not susceptible to saturation (Derrida, 1988).

> Every sign, linguistic or nonlinguistic, spoken or written (in the current sense of this opposition), in a small or large unit, can be *cited,* put between quotation marks; in so doing it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable. This does not imply that the mark is valid outside of a context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center or absolute anchoring [*ancrage*]. This citationality, this duplication or duplicity, this iterability of the mark is neither an accident nor an anomaly. It is that (normal/abnormal) without which a mark could not even have a function called "normal" (Derrida, 1988, p. 12).

Also, in iterability there's the possibility of the unusual, the unprecedented, or, as Derrida (1988, p. 54) puts it

> There is no doubt that the "permanence" or the "survival" of the document (*scripta manent*), when and to the degree (always relative) that they take place, imply iterability or remaining in general. But the inverse is not true. Permanence

> is not a necessary effect of remaining. I will go even further: the structure of the remainder, implying alteration, renders all absolute permanence impossible. Ultimately, remaining and permanence are incompatible.

According to Glendinning (2013), by thinking about iterability, Derrida's concern lies in the "logical possibility and not merely the physical opportunity" (p. 82) of a written text to continue *readable*, even if its sender or receiver are no longer *present*. In this sense, iterability is related to the possibility for a text to remain functioning in the absence of/ beyond the "*living present* of its context of production" (p. 82). In other words, iterability disrupts logocentrism.

In this sense, as Derrida puts it,

> In order for my "written communication" to retain its function as writing, i.e., its readability, it must remain readable despite the absolute disappearance of any receiver, determined in general. My communication must be repeatable – iterable – in the absolute absence of the receiver or of any empirically determinable collectivity of receivers. Such iterability (-*iter*, again, probably comes from *itara*, other in Sanskrit, and everything that follows can be read as the working out of the logic that ties repetition to alterity) structures the mark of writing itself, no matter what particular type of writing is involved (whether pictographical, hieroglyphic, ideographic, phonetic, alphabetic, to cite the old categories). A writing that is not structurally readable – iterable – beyond the death of the addressee would not be writing (1972, p. 7).

In other words, Derrida insists on the idea that, "the 'unity of the signifying form' that is 'required to permit its recognition' 'only constitutes itself by virtue of its iterability'" (Glendinning, 2011, p. 83). It is possible, then, to understand that in the U.S. foreign policy discourses concerning its "Wars on Terrors," "terrorism' is an *iterable trace* that breaks context and remains unprecedented in its sameness. More than that, it is possible to re-read, in the next chapters, the U.S. foreign policy and its "Wars on Terrors" having in mind the idea of iterability, for, "although the movement [iterability of the U.S. 'Wars on Terrors'] is without limit, numbers are not accumulating here. Or rather, the limit is: *not once* (Glendinning, 2011, p. 83).

Following this path, another idea presented by Derrida that is *inscribed in a chain of possible substitutions*, alongside deconstruction and iterability, is *différance*. It is a neographism, in the sense that Derrida introduces the letter "a"

and removes the second letter "e" from the word "*différence*" (Santiago, 1976)[97]. And I believe that this idea can help us understand how "terrorism" keeps eluding security in the USA, because *différance* puts into question the authority of absolute, unquestionable beginnings[98], as well as the value of an originary, essential, existential presence[99]. For it considers the privilege conceded to presence "no longer as the absolute matrix form of being but a 'determination' and an 'effect'" (Derrida, 1968, p. 55, my translation)[100].

Also, as Alan Bass and Derrida (1978 p. xvi) put it, *différer* (from the Latin *differre*) can mean, at the same time, to differ and to defer. In other words, in the word "*différance*" there is the coincidence of meanings of "to differ (in space) and to defer (to put off in time, to postpone presence)". In this sense, while to differ means not being identical, being different, being "other;" to defer refers to a temporal mediation (Santiago, 1976, p. 23). This way, as Santiago (1976) puts it, *différance* involves, at the same time, *temporalization* and *spacing*.

This way, *différance* as temporalization cannot be thought of in the horizon of the present, as an originary presence that could be appropriated; rather, it

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[97] It is interesting to highlight that even though it is a discrete graphic intervention, it represents a significant intervention that Derrida undertakes in questioning the phonocentric tradition. According to Santiago (1976, p. 22, my translation) the "a" in *différance* is a mute (soundless) mark, that is "one writes or reads it, but does not hear it". In the original "o a de *différance* propõe-se como uma 'marca muda', se escreve ou se lê, mas não se ouve." More than that, as Derrida (1968, p. 43, my translation) puts it "this very fact – this silence functioning only within a so-called phonetic writing – signals or reminds us in a very appropriate way that, contrary to enormous prejudice, there is no phonetic writing. There is no pure and strict phonetic writing." In the original, "[...] cela même – ce silence fonctionnant à l'intérieur seulement d'une écriture dite phonétique – signale ou rappelle de façon très opportune que, contrairement à un énorme préjugé, il n'y a pas d'écriture phonétique. Il n'y a pas d'écriture purement et rigoureusement phonétique." (Derrida, 1968, p. 43).

[98] "[...] what is precisely in question is the authority of an unquestionable beginning, an absolute starting point, a principled responsibility." (Derrida, 1968, p. 44-45, my translation). In the original, "[...] ce qui s'y met précisément en question, c'est la requête d'un commencement de droit, d'un point de départ absolu, d'une responsabilité principielle." (Derrida, 1968, p. 44-45).

[99] "And yet what is thus marked by *différance* is not theological, not even of the most negative order of negative theology, the latter having always been busy bringing out, as we know, a supra-essentiality through beyond the finite categories of essence and existence, that is to say of presence, and always hastening to recall that if the predicate of existence is refused to God, it is for recognize in him a superior, inconceivable, ineffable mode of being. (Derrida, 1968, p. 48, my translation, my emphases). In the original: "Et pourtant ce qui se marque ainsi de la différance n'est pas théologique, pas même de l'ordre le plus négatif de la théologie négative, celle-ci s'étant toujours affairée à dégager, comme on sait, une supra-essentialité par-delà les catégories finies de l'essence et de l'existence, c'est-à-dire de la présence, et s'empressant toujours de rappeler que si le prédicat de l'existence est refusé à Dieu, c'est pour lui reconnaître un mode d'être supérieur, inconcevable, ineffable" (Derrida, 1968, p. 48).

[100] In the original, "non plus comme la forme matricielle absolue de l'être mais comme une 'détermination' et comme un 'effet'" (Derrida, 1968, p. 55).

presupposes that the sign "represents the presence in its absence" (Derrida, 1968, p. 47, my translation). In other words, when we cannot take, see, touch, or show something, when we cannot *present* it or when it cannot present itself, "we signify, we go through the detour of the sign" (1968, p. 47, my translation).

This way, the "sign" stands in and represents the *thing*[101] in its absence and at distance, "detached enough from it to be its delegate, but still attached enough to it to be its sign, to refer, in principle, to it alone" (Bennington, 2000, p. 24). In this sense, the "sign" – the "signifier" and the "signified" – will always be a deffered presence, for "the circulation of signs defers the moment when we could encounter the thing itself, seize it, consume it or spend it, touch it, see it, have the present intuition of it." (p. 47, my translation). Or, as Bennington (2000, p. 24) puts it "[t]he time of the sign is reduced to the time of this referral and, in the presence of its thing, the sign disappears."

More than that, what Derrida seems to describe is that

> […] signification as a difference in temporalization is the classically determined structure of the sign: it presupposes that the sign, deferring presence, is only thinkable from the presence that it defers and in view of the deferred presence that we aim to reappropriate. Following this classic semiology, the substitution of the sign for the thing itself is both *second* and *provisional*: second from an original and lost presence from which the sign will come to derive; provisional with regard to this final and missing presence in view of which the sign would be in a movement of mediation (1968, p. 47-48, my translation)[102].

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[101] According to Bennington (2000, p. 24-25), "the word 'thing' is itself a sign which refers to two possible things – usually called 'referent' and 'sense' (or signified). Without a distinction such as this, the whole of language would be reduced to a list of proper names of things, and would not in fact be a language (we shall be returning to the proper name). Between the word and the thing, the level of sense, signified, ideas, or concept (the distinctions between these terms are unimportant here) means that we can call a cat a cat rather than Marmaduke. The sign refers to the concept which refers to the world, allowing us a grasp of the world which is other than chaotic and evanescent."

[102] In the original, Derrida argues that "Le signe, dit-on couramment, se met à la place de la chose même, de la chose présente, 'chose' valant ici aussi bien por le sens que pour le référent. Le signe représente le présent en son absence. El en tient lieu. Quand nous ne pouvons prendre ou montrer la chose, disons le présent, l'étant-présent, quand le présent ne se présent pas, nous signifions, nous passons par le détour du signe. Nous prenons ou donnons un signe. Nous faisons signe. Le signe serait donc la présence différée. Qu'il s'agisse de signe verbal ou écrit, ce signe monétaire, de délégation électorale et de représentation politique, la circulation des signes diffère le moment où nous pourrions rencontrer la chose même, nous en emparer, la consommer ou la dépenser, la toucher, la voir, en avoir l'intuition présente. Ce que je décris ici pour définir, en la banalité de ses traits, la signification comme différance de temporalisation, c'est la structure classiquement déterminée du signe : elle présuppose que le signe, différant la présence, n'est pensable qu'à partir de la présence qu'il diffère et en vue de la présence différée qu'on vise à se réapproprier. Suivant cette sémiologie classique, la substitution du signe à la chose même est à la fois seconde et provisoire : seconde depuis une présence originelle et perdue dont le signe viendrait à dériver ; provisoire au regard de

Différance as spacing, on the other hand, cannot be separated from temporalization (Santiago, 1976). So, "*comment s'ajoutent-elles?*" (Derrida, 1968, p. 47); how do they add up? *Différance* as spacing establishes the possibility of conceptualization in the interior of a linguistic system (Santiago, 1976). For, since the "sign" is never fully present – rather, it is constituted from the traces within it and from other elements in a chain or system – it requires "an interval to separate it from *what it is not* so that it can be itself"[103] (Derrida, 1968, p. 51). In other words, "we will designate *différance* as the movement according to which language, or any code, any system of references in general is constituted 'historically' as a tissue of differences." (Derrida, 1968, p. 51, my translation)[104].

Différance would therefore be the play that produces differences as well as the effects of difference. (Santiago, 1976). However, in so doing, "this interval which constitutes it in the present must also, at the same time, divide the present in itself, thus sharing, with the present, everything that can be thought from it" (Derrida, 1968, p. 51-52, my translation)[105].

Also, according to Santiago (1976, p. 33-34), *différance* as spacing indicates an *outside* and an irreducible alterity. This scenario makes it impossible for an identity to close itself, to suffice without an-*other*; rather, it is opens for the "outside," whether it likes it or not, which, in turn, inhibits any possibility of an internally absolute coherence. In so doing, it is constantly on the move: "[…] keeping within itself the past element and already allowing itself to be excavated by the mark of its relationship with the future element" (Santiago, 1976, p. 24, my translation)[106]

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cette présence finale et manquante en vue de laquelle que le signe serait en mouvement de médiation" (Derrida, 1968, p. 47 – p. 48).

[103] In the original : "Il faut qu'un intervalle le sépare de ce qui n'est pas lui pour qu'il soit lui-même" (Derrida, 1968, p. 51)

[104] In the original, "nous désignerons par différance le mouvement selon lequel la langue, ou tout code, tout système de renvois en général se constitue 'historiquement' comme tissue de différences" (Derrida, 1968, p. 51).

[105] In the original: "[…] cet intervalle qui le constitue en présent doit aussi du même coup diviser le présent en lui-même, partageant ainsi, avec le présent, tout ce qu'on peut penser à partir de lui" (Derrida, 1968, p. 51-52).

[106] In the original: "[…] guardando em si a marca do elemento passado e já se deixando escavar pela marca de sua relação com elemento futuro[...]" (Santiago, 1976, p. 24).

Here lies the connection between *différance* as temporalization (*temporisation*) and *différance* as spacing (*espacement*), "[…] becoming-space of time or becoming-time of space" (Derrida, 1968, p. 52, my translation)[107]. In short, the attempts to constitute the present as something real, original and irreducible open space for "non-original traces and retentions" (Derrida, 1968, p. 52, my translation). And that is what Jacques Derrida proposes to call archi-writing, archi-trace or *différance* (Derrida, 1968, p. 52, my translation)[108].

Having *différance* in mind, it is possible to re-read, in the next chapters, U.S. foreign policy and its "Wars on Terrors" considering that "terrorism" has been in this process of being presented and differentiated – from "Democracy," "security," and "right" actions, for example – and deferred –for it is presented, invoked, yet not defined nor eliminated, from time to time, and, according to U.S. foreign policy *textiles*, it seems to walk hand in hand with different "dangerous," persistent manifestations. This way, *différance* as temporalization and as spacing indicate an outside that marks the impossibility of being neither original nor fully present without an-*other* (identity, sign, enemy, etc.) (Santiago, 1976). Rather, the trace of "an identity" such as that of a USA that fears "terrorism" cannot be condensed and *presented* as such and, yet there are attempts to do so.

"Another name of *différance*" (Derrida, 2016, p. 335) is *supplément* (supplement). The idea of the supplement represents both to complement (*suppléer; supplétif*), and to replace (*supplanter; suppléance*) (Santiago, 1976, p. 88; Zehfuss, 2009, p. 158). As we can observe these meanings are, at the same time, complementary and conflicting, for a supplement is both an addition – it enriches, adds something to what already exists, it complements – and is something that always already threatens to supersede –to replace – what it supplements (Santiago, 1976, p. 88; Zehfuss, 2009, p. 158).

As Santiago (1976, p. 88) shows, the supplement, "as a substitute […] intervenes and insinuates itself in place of a presence that can only be effective through the proxy of a supplementary 'sign,' which takes the form of that which,

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[107] In the original: "devenir-espace du temps ou devenir-temps de l'espace" (Derrida, 1968, p. 52).

[108] In the original: "Cet intervalle se constituant, se divisant dynamiquement, c'est ce qu'on peut appeler espacement, devenir-espace du temps ou devenir-temps de l'espace. Et c'est cette constitution du présent, comme synthèse "originaire" et irréductiblement non-simple, donc stricto sensu, non-originaire, des traces, de rétentions [...] que je propose d'appeler archi-écriture, archi-trace ou différance" (Derrida, 1968, p. 52).

simultaneously, it resists, replaces and encompasses, through violence."[109] In this sense, following the idea that anything is never purely present, "the sign is always the supplement of the thing itself" (Derrida, 2016, p. 328). This way, the supplement stands for the thing "in its absence, but it also replaces it" (Zehfuss, 2002, p. 201). More than that, the play of supplementarity makes it possible to open a chain of supplements (a chain of *fils supplémentaires*) in which a supplement is "modeled" (*typer*) by its double – that is, there is always a supplement of a supplement (of a supplement) (Santiago, 1976, p. 88).

Supplementarity is only thinkable because of the absence of a center – of a transcendental signifier and a transcendental signified – and the impossibility of a transcendental "sign" that has an origin (*archê*) and an end (*telos*). These absences make the movement of supplementarity possible. In this sense, the play of the supplement is always at the mercy of the forces that occupy and drive it, opening space to polysemy and intertextuality (Santiago, 1976, p. 88-90). That being the case, the supplement is "always already dangerous" (Yamato, 2021, p. 6), for it not only complements and threatens to replace something, but it constantly "involves a persistent resistance to assimilation" (p. 6).

In other words, the supplement is dangerous because it escapes dichotomies, since it can be, at the same time, the "inside" and the "outside," the "self" and the "other," "here" and "there." It eludes extremes, as well as the alternatives of "presence" or "absence," for it has no essence (Santiago, 1976, p. 90). In so doing, it marks the ungrounded ground (Marchart, 2007; Yamato, 2021) upon which something could claim to be/be claimed as "the original" (Santiago, 1976) and upon which modern discourses – such as those which stimulate and undertake "Wars on Terrors" – seek for authority in defining what "democracy, humanity, justice, freedom, good, terrorism, injustice, barbarity, war, bad" are. The play of the supplement is, then, what makes it possible for "terrorism" to be both becoming and unbecoming, i.e., (un)becoming.

It is also important to point out that in *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* (1978) Derrida argues that the idea of a center, a "fully present center" (Rasiński, 2011, p. 12), governs the structure and its

[109] In the original: "Como suplente intervém e se insinua em lugar de uma presença que só pode se efetivar por procuração de signo suplemento, que assume a forma daquilo a que, simultaneamente, ele resiste, substitui e engloba, por violência."

structuration but, at the same time, escapes from the process of structuration (Derrida, 1978, p. 279). In so doing, the "center is, paradoxically, *within* the structure and *outside* it" (Derrida, 1978, p. 279).

According to Rasiński (2011 p. 12,) it is possible to understand that this paradox derives from the "never fulfilled desire [that] brings about numerous displacements and replacements of the idea of the center. As a consequence, we never deal with its full presence, but only with its substitutes." In other words, we never deal with the full presence of "terrorism" or of a "War on Terror" but with elusive attempts to define, to fight, and to get rid of "terrorisms" and "Wars on Terrors."

As outlined by Derrida (1978), if there only are centers with no natural sites – origins, ends, pure presence or absence –, then words, ideas, events, *everything* becomes discourse: *il n'y a pas de hors texte*, there is nothing outside the text. Simply put, the aspects that captivate our attention, such as the possibility of a tangible "reality" and the ways in which these aspects are constantly invoked, remembered or forgotten could never be separated "from discursive structures and systems of signification, or what Derrida calls 'the general text'" (Culler, 2007, p. 157).

Derrida (1978) also posits that "[…] the original or transcendental signified is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the interplay of signification infinitely" (Derrida, 1978, p. 280). Considering this position, it is possible to say that Derrida attacks any possibility of closure, for attempts of closure are totalizing (Zehfuss, 2004; Rasiński, 2011). Also, according to this position, attempts of closure could be understood as "conditioned by the exclusion of the 'constitutive outside' that threatens the order of the structure and prevents its ultimate closure" (Rasiński, 2011, p. 13). For, as Pelbart (2000, p. 201) puts it, "perhaps, there are no two worlds, not even a single world, but only the outside in its eternal flow"[110].

Thus, I suggest that through *iterability*, *différance*, *supplementarity* and *deconstruction*, Derrida's interventions offer not stasis and silence, but rather

[110] Although I do not develop the idea of constitutive outsid(e)rs in this chapter, I do so in chapter 5, for I understand that the "outside" and the "outsider" play a structural and constitutive role regarding the international, the state and the modern individual (Walker, 1993; 2006; 2009; Yamato 2014; 2019; 2020; 2021).

inspiring and fresh reflections that help us rethink and reimagine, in the next chapters, "terrorisms" and the U.S. "Wars on Terrors." After all, there can be no "Wars on Terrors" nor "Terrorisms" without ambiguities, deconstruction, iterability, *différance*, supplementarity, a center that escapes its own structurality – and, as I show in Chapter 3, there can be no "Wars on Terrors" without spectrality, traces and hauntology.

2.4.2

Asymmetrical Counterconcepts, structural iterability and the political instrumentalization of language

> Grammar serves power. Nature does not throw up "silent majorities," "poor people," or "the powerless." Politics does. The silent in world politics are not physically voiceless: they are politically silenced. The disenfranchised are not born without power: they are disempowered. There is no poverty gene to be discovered: people are made poor by political choices.
>
> Ken Booth (2007, p. 160).

While reflecting on "What is it about the War on Terror' that provides a persistent narrative that keeps structuring the terms of the US foreign policy during the 21st century?" and considering the possibilities that lie within *deconstruction, iterability, différance,* supplementarity and the absence of a center, I came across the writings of Reinhart Koselleck and, more specifically, with two texts that seem to speak to what was already considering in my reflections. The first one is *The Historical-Political Semantics of Asymmetric Counterconcepts* (2004) and the second is *Concepts of the Enemy* (2018)[111].

In these texts, the author suggests that human experiences are organized by a "here/there," and an "inside/outside" (Hoffman and Franzel, 2018) and by the political instrumentalizations of languages that create enmities carried out throughout history. These "concepts of the enemy" (Koselleck, 2018) – such as those of Helenes *versus* Barbarians; Christians *versus* Heathens; human *versus* nonhuman; and superhuman *versus* subhuman – generally come in pairs, binaries,

[111] Reading and understanding these texts were only possible because I could also read Roberto Yamato's study called "Beyond the line: Carl Schmitt and the constitutive outsider of the International" in which he reads the pirate in Carl Schmitt with the help of Reinhart Koselleck's study on asymmetric counterconcepts.

dichotomies that "claim to cover the whole of humanity," and, in so doing, leave others behind (Koselleck, 2004, p. 156-157)[112].

As Koselleck (2004) puts it, "names, for oneself and for others, belong to the everyday life of men and women," for they work in the articulation of identity of a person and also in that person's relations towards others (p. 155). Concepts, in this sense, are important within groups because, with and through them, it is possible to recognize and identify "oneself" and the "other." In this sense, sometimes we can observe mutually recognized names (like mother and son; employer and employee); however, sometimes there can be abusive (nick)names – like "old bag" and "layabout;" "exploiter" and "human material" – as well as ethnic and racial slurs (p. 155). Moreover, mutual recognition, as well as exclusionary recognition can be observed "in groups named as church, party, *polis*, people, family, state, and so on" (p. 156).

In this fashion, the names "we" use for "ourselves" may coincide (implying mutual linguistic recognition) or diverge (implying possibility of not being properly recognized) (p. 157). In the second case, that of divergence, where conflicting labels are at work and are employed, unevenly, towards one direction, there's the use of what Koselleck (2004) calls "asymmetric" classifications. That being the case, groups can (attempt to) exclude "other" groups – through restrictions, segregation, prohibition, persecution, bans, extermination – so that the former can become politically dominant and the latter, precluded (p. 155).

This way, in trying to define themselves as singular, groups establish differences among them and other groups. Koselleck (2004) illustrates this scenario in highlighting how "the Church" means "Catholic church" for Catholics; how "the Party" means something specific for "Communists;" how "the Nation" had a specific meaning for the French Revolutionaries, and means something different for each of us; and so on. This way, the use of the article "the" in these cases, and in

[112] I am aware Koselleck (2004; 2018) constantly resorts to "concepts" – instead of "quasi-concepts" – and invokes dichotomic constructions. I am also aware that doing so appears to be notably "anti-Derridean." However, as I already mentioned, even if this work questions closure and attempts of grasping – limits, divisions, differences –, it also recognizes that there are *endless attempts* of closure and of grasping what supposedly must be "real." More than that, as the reader will observe throughout this work, I acknowledge that concepts and divisions – even if fragile, contestable and contradictory – affects multiple bodies and minds of the international as they are treated as real and unquestionable.

many others, serves a purpose, that of political, ideological, and social singularization (p. 156).

That is also the case of *the United States*, which is constantly referred to as "*the* Greatest Nation on earth" (Kennedy, 1960; Bush, 2004a; Obama, 2014; Biden 2022); "*the* greatest republic upon which the sun has ever shone" (Roosevelt, 1902); "*the* world's greatest nation" (Bush, 1991d); or "*the* greatest nation in all of history" (Trump, 2021). This way, several times, these claims imply the USA would tirelessly lead and undertake *the* "War on Terror" (Rumsfeld, 2001; NSS, 2002; Obama, 2009c); *the* "Global War on Terror" (Rumsfeld, 2006); *the* "war against al-Qaeda" (Obama, 2013); "to conquer extremism and vanquish *the* forces of terrorism" (Trump, 2017, n.p.); and to "remain vigilant to *the* threat of terror that terrorism poses" (Biden, 2021d, n.p.).

These claims to universality and generality resort to "asymmetric concepts" and, in so doing, reject all kinds of comparison (Koselleck, 2004, p. 156). In this scenario, we can observe what Koselleck (2004) calls "counterconcepts", that is, concepts that discriminate against *an*-other (Yamato, 2018) – for this excluded "other" is *not* considered correct, desirable, good, good enough, or normal.

Hence, non-Catholics as heathens; non-Communists as traitors; non-European / Non-Western as barbaric, childish, simpler, and savage; non-American as undemocratic, unjust, autocratic, weak, suppressed, not free; etc. This political, ideological, social, economic organization appears in Koselleck's work as an essential feature of political action that works in order to attempt to paradoxically solidify and transcend boundaries (2004, p. 156).

This way, while presenting the idea of "asymmetric" classifications, Koselleck (2004) helps us understand that there are those to resort to concepts to "deny the reciprocity of mutual recognition" (p. 157). More than that, as the author puts it, the linguistic work of politics is continuously based on a fundamental figure, that of the "asymmetric opposition" (p. 157). In this sense, Koselleck acknowledges that the political and the everyday life singularization of certain concepts instigate the constitution of "counterconcepts" which discriminate against *an*-other (concept, group, person, institution). Hence, these dynamics do not allow for peaceful existence, but rather opens up a path for violent hierarchies (Derrida, 1988).

In the last subsection, I mentioned the importance of iterability for this dissertation. Koselleck (2004) works in a similar –but not identical – path, for he argues that

> Each of the antitheses […] has its own structures, but it also has structures in common with the others. These structures are continually evident in political language, even if the words or names change with time. The structure of the counter-concepts does not depend solely on the words from which the conceptual pairs are composed. *The words are replaceable, whereas the asymmetric structure of the argument survives* (Koselleck, 2004, p. 159; emphasis added).

This way, "even though words or names change over time," their asymmetrical counterconceptual structure survives (Koselleck, 2004, p. 159) – much like in the logocentric survival, where "the limit is always at work" (Derrida, 1988, p. 12), and much like in iterability, where, in a "structure of repeatability" (Royle, 2003), lies the possibility of the "sign" always being repeated while being transformed (Derrida, 1988). In this sense, Koselleck (2004) presents the idea of *structural iterability* which is possible because

> history is never identical with its linguistic registration and formulated experience, whether this is expressed orally or in writing, but at the same time, it is not independent of these linguistic articulations. Our counterconcepts then prove the iterability, as well as the novelty, of the situations they refer to (p. 158).

Or, as Yamato (2018, p. 219) puts it, *structural iterability* is possible because the asymmetric structural opposition of concepts (counterconcepts) remains, over time, in spite of changes in their proper names and historical contexts. Therefore, it is possible to note that "conceptual pairs can be separated from their original conditions of emergence and their former concrete context," for "they are historically transferable" (Koselleck, 2004, p. 159). Also, following the Derridean ideas of *différance* and of the supplement, we can observe how "counterconcepts can paradoxically contain iterability as well as novelty" (Koselleck, 2004, p. 159).

Accordingly, the "inside" and the "outside;" the "self" and the "other;" the "familiar" and the "foreign;" the "known" and the "unknown;" the "human" and the "inhuman;" the "superhuman" and the "subhuman" while somehow organizing all experience, rely upon on boundaries that may shift on the course of few or lots

of years (Koselleck, 2018, p. 197). Or as Julio Bentivoglio puts it, a concept is susceptible to changes, it *is not* a stable, permanent center; rather, it is better apprehended as something immersed both in temporality and in language (2010, p. 123). Hence the importance of the Derridean idea of *quasi-concepts* which suggests that there is something at work that constantly attempts to refer us to a structure and inherent structuring of logocentrism, to sustain the metaphysics of presence and binary, hierarchical structures and orderings. Here, once again, we can see the metaphysics of presence (politics of reality), iterability, *différance*, the supplement, iterability at work.

In this sense, polemical in form (Koselleck, 2004, p. 181) and unequally antithetical (2004, p. 157), asymmetrical counterconcepts, once invoked and applied politically (2004, p. 187), pave the way for totalitarian (2004, p. 187) and violent consequences, for they reshape relations and distinctions among groups (p. 158). More than that, Koselleck (2004) helps us understand that "as long as human agencies exclude and include, there will be asymmetric counterconcepts and techniques of negation, which will penetrate conflicts until such time as new conflicts arise" (p. 231).

As I already mentioned, Koselleck (2018) declares that human spheres, all of them, are organized in order to recognize a "here" and a "there," an "inside" and an "outside," a "known" and an "unknown," and a "familiar" and a "foreign" (p. 197). In this sense,

> As soon as individuals gather to act as groups and organize themselves socially, economically, politically, religiously, or however else, "on this or that side" becomes "inside" and "outside." Boundaries solidify, demarcations become socially institutionalized, and rituals or procedures seal and guard forms of entry or exit, from baptism and confirmation to entrance and graduation exams, from the delivery of a document to the granting of a passport. The more such memberships or roles govern the life of a person – as in our industrial society – the more such demarcations of inside and outside overlap (Koselleck, 2018, p. 197).

Asymmetrical counterconceptual *iterable* structures allow for the re-creation of a supposed "political interior" through which groups intend to/ pretend to/ seem to/ claim to/ believe to be "shielded from the entirety of the outside world" (Koselleck, 2004, p. 162). However, in claiming and/or believing that they are

internally coherent and closed off to the outside, these very groups continuously transgress boundaries. For, no group could exist and survive without "conflicts and compromises," "contacts and contrasts" (Koselleck, 2018, p. 197). More than that, equally to what happens to asymmetrical counterconcepts, these demarcations – boundaries, borders, limits – are continuously delineated in new and unusual ways (Vaughan-Williams, 2009; Walker, 2009; Lindahl, 2013).

Bearing these ideas in mind, we can see how these demarcations can assume a threatening role, as it is the case of boundary-producing-political-performances – foreign policies – where the "foreigner" becomes the "enemy" (Balibar, 2017). These demarcations "block contracts, inhibit compromises, when consensus-building only serves to stoke conflict, unleash civil or foreign wars, and enable mass murder" (Koselleck, 2018, p. 198). In other words, when the "other," the "foreign," becomes an "enemy," that individual or group is not only positioned as someone to be actively opposed but, in a graver scenario, when the "other" is dehumanized, they become susceptible to extermination (Koselleck, 2018, p. 198) and subjected to abject forms of violence (Yamato, 2014). And, as Koselleck (2004) puts it, this bloody path is merely a temporary cessation, as the history of survivors can only endure through continued "contacts and contrasts," perpetuating cycles of "conflicts and compromises."

As it happens with "asymmetrical counterconcepts," Koselleck (2018) understands that the political instrumentalization of language is an important condition for "finding and entering into conflict with 'enemies'" (p. 199). In this sense, when politically instrumentalized, language plays a role both in including and excluding, opening, and closing doors. In this fashion, Koselleck (2018, p. 206) warns us: we need to be cautious in the face of *all* stereotypes, because they construct and keep "conceptual cages" that constrain our critical thinking and freezes action. More than that, he recommends: "Caution in the face of every dualism – fictive enemies lurk behind it" (p. 206).

Koselleck says that "enmity lurks behind such marks" (2018, p. 199). I partially disagree with this affirmation, for I would prefer to say that enmity lurks within and slices through such marks. By invoking "humanity," places like the USA claim to a universality and generality that appears to be so totalizing "that no human being appears to be excluded" (Koselleck, 2004, p. 160). However, something different takes place: those conceptualized as, considered, pointed out as "inhuman"

do not exactly "cease to be members of a universal human society" (Koselleck, 2004, p. 181). Rather, they became "tyrants," "animals in human form," "enemies of the commonality," "demons;" something other than the "human species in general" (Koselleck, 2004, p. 181; Yamato, 2014).

The appeal to humanity, this way, walks hand in hand with the exclusion of *other* humans – it lurks within and slices through marks of exclusion (Yamato, 2020)[113]. In plugging "themselves" to the name "human," not only do certain groups claim to own these credentials, but they also claim to prove "their enemies" are something other than "human" (Koselleck, 2004, p. 201-202). They are "subhuman," and, in this case, the scene seems to be even worse, for this asymmetrical conceptualization

> robs the other of the possibility of being an enemy. He [sic.] is forced into a position below the bare life of human possibilities, he [sic.] is literally dehumanized, turned into potential nonexistence, 'unworthy to live [*lebensunwert*],' and thus devoured (Koselleck, 2018, p. 202).

In this sense, with the help of Koselleck (2004; 2018), it is possible, then, to re-think "terrorism" and "Wars on Terrors" in the USA during the 21st century, for "terrorism" can be understood as a trace – a "signifier" – in the "negative asymmetric counterconceptual position" (Yamato, 2018, p. 219). "Concepts of the enemy remain available to be called upon" (Koselleck, 2018, p. 205) and, in a similar vein, in the U.S. foreign policy *textiles*, quasi-concepts of "terrorism" remain available to be called upon and allow for restrictions, segregation, prohibition, persecutions, detentions, bans, extermination. This way, in trying to

[113] It is important to keep in mind that many of Koselleck's works have been notably influenced by the contributions of Carl Schmitt (Tribe, 2004; Castelo Branco, 2006; Yamato, 2020). In *The Concept of the Political*, for example, Schmitt (2007, p. 57) insists that "[…] whoever invokes humanity wants to cheat. To confiscate the word humanity, to invoke and monopolize such a term probably has certain incalculable effects, such as denying the enemy the quality of being human and declaring him to be an outlaw of humanity; and a war can thereby be driven to the most extreme inhumanity." Also, as Roberto Yamato (2020, p. 17) reminds us, both Carl Schmitt and Reinhart Koselleck express concerns regarding the "legitimization of a discriminatory construction of the enemy as a result of the mobilization of humanity as an asymmetric counterconcept." With that in mind, we can observe that dichotomies such as the Schmittian "friend versus foe" or "humanity versus outlaw of humanity" rely upon an asymmetric relationship constantly invoked by Koselleck (2004), where the first names – those of friend and humanity – hold a place in the modern international world (Yamato, 2019), and the second – those of foe and outlaw of humanity – are reassigned to somewhere else, to the "outer limits of the modern international" (Yamato, 2020, p. 17).

map and/or trace (Yamato, 2018) "terrorism's" position within the U.S. foreign policy and security agendas, it is possible to understand that even though it changes over time, and even though it eludes definition, it still persists and haunts the U.S. foreign policy and its "National Security Strategies."

2.5
Opening remarks

> I am a little scared: scared of surrendering completely because the next instant is the unknown. The next instant, do I make it? or does it make itself? We make it together with our breath. And with the flair of the bullfighter in the ring […] Let me tell you: I'm trying to seize the fourth dimension of this instant-now so fleeting that it's already gone because it's already become a new instant-now that's also already gone. Every thing has an instant in which it is. I want to grab hold of the is of the thing. These instants passing through the air I breathe in fireworks they explode silently in space. I want to possess the atoms of time. And to capture the present, forbidden by its very nature: the present slips away and the instant too, I am this very second forever in the now.
>
> Clarice Lispector (2012, p. 3).

How, then, should this dissertation continue? I stubbornly repeat: we must *interpret interpretations more than we interpret things*. This way, the next pages continue to express how we can remain feeling uncomfortable with ready-to-hand explanations, definitions, conceptualizations, divisions, condemnations, and *contexts*. Accordingly, the next chapters pay attention to violent manifestations and to the way they are dealt with and classified.

In so doing, I remain beware of war *texts*, *declaration* texts, and security *texts*, having in mind the idea of "text as text-ile" (Spivak, 2016, p. 575), that is, of texts as *some*thing that take place in the scene of interpretation (Santiago, 1976). For only this way, this dissertation will be able to "weave a fabric with threads extracted from other text-iles" (Santiago, 1976, p. 51)[114]. In this sense, by interpreting interpretations more than things, it is possible to pull threads from these fabrics – that declares "Wars on Terrors" in the name of "security" and as part of a supposedly coherent "foreign policy" – and to observe the unraveling of other

[114] In the original: "tecer um tecido com os fios extraídos de outros tecidos-textos" (Santiago, 1976, p. 51).

textiles[115]. In so doing, we supplement them, we add something, and, at the same time, we threaten to de-center them and dare to think of "Wars on Terrors."

Having this in mind, it is possible to understand that when I say that one of the aims of this dissertation is to *de-center* the U.S. "Wars on Terrors," I want to show that "terrorism's" meaning has not a fixed center; rather, it exists as a substitute construct(ion) that allows for the re-production of meanings that work through an operation of differences (Santiago, 1976, p. 16)[116]. This way, when I choose to talk about "Wars on Terrors," deconstruction, *différance*, supplementarity are at work, for I try to attentively read, question, overturn, displace and de-center a discourse – that of one "War on Terror" inaugurated by George W. Bush in 2001 because of the September 11 attacks and that took place exclusively against *Al-Qaeda,* Iraq and Afghanistan – and to propose that this new, plural concept– "Wars on Terrors" – "could never be included in the previous regime" (Derrida, 1988, p. 41). This way, the "War on Terror" can no longer be (Derrida, 1988, p. 41).

At the same time, it is possible to say that structural iterability as well as asymmetrical counterconcepts are taken into account, for I consider that even if "terrorism's" and the "War on Terror" names change over time (Koselleck, 2004), their asymmetrical counterconceptual – logocentric, iterable – structure survives. That is, s*ome*-thing remains, persists, eludes, and, as I show in chapter 3, "is" a specter that *haunts* the U.S. foreign policy.

As such, this chapter represents only one step in the development of this dissertation. In elaborating the previous sections of this chapter, I intended to present words (i.e., ideas, problems, [quasi-]concepts) valuable to this work, such as "terrorism," "foreign policy," "deconstruction," "iterability," "*différance,*" "supplement," "asymmetrical counterconcepts," "structural iterability"; the U.S. recent endeavors against "terrorism;" as well as a theoretical-conceptual approach engaged in resist settled truths and oppositions. This way, in this chapter, the aim was to guard against pure presence/absence, to pay attention to the ungraspable

[115] In Plato's Pharmacy, Derrida (1981b, p. 85) says that "Latter, within the same tissue, within the same texts, we will draw on other filial filaments, pull the same strings once more, and witness the weaving or unraveling of other designs."

[116] We have already explored *différance;* however, in chapter 3 I explore the idea of an "operation of differences." This way I demonstrate how a "signifier" and/or a "concept" operate through a differential system, that of an endless chain of remittances, of spectrality, and hauntology.

traces of limits, to beware of continuous attempts to asymmetrically discriminate against an-*other* and to understand that every-thing can be subject to fission.

***

The reader has probably re-read this section's title. Maybe she/he/they expected to see "concluding remarks," "partial conclusions," or a "conclusion." And I must confess, the first draft of this chapter had a "2.5 concluding remarks" section. However, I cannot direct this chapter to any kind of closure; for, rather, it represents an initial attempt to disturb and dis-orient ideas we may have been taking for granted. In so doing, I could only suggest that this task should continue in the following chapters and that we remain *open* to this ungraspable, endless, open-ended – and a little scary next instant of the unknown – pursuit of contemplating the U.S. "Wars on Terrors".

3
Haunting Security

3.1
Introduction

In the U.S. foreign policy *textiles* regarding "War*s* on Terror*s*," the name "terrorism" appears as some*thing* which *presence* is self-evident and which purpose/function (*Being*) would be destructive, harmful, violent, based on wrong beliefs that work as a motive for action. In this sense, "terrorism" is *presented* (showed and made present) as a phenomenon undertaken by "terrorists" – bad, inhumane, alien entities (*beings*). In other words, it is possible to observe that there are attempts to disambiguate and define a (supposedly) identifiable entity – "terrorist" –and relate it to certain behaviors, events, processes, and relations – "terrorism" – towards other entities: good, humane, familiar (*beings*) whose purpose/function (*Being*) would be productive, harmless, peaceful, based on the right beliefs that work as a motive for action.

In this research, such an endeavor is considered dangerous. It reinforces averageness where there should be critique, and it makes us indifferent towards something we must be suspicious of. It attempts to plant what should be deracinated. It fabricates tradition where there should be interrogation. It tries to reify "terrorism" as something that is graspable. It brings to *life* and *presence* what I consider an uprooted, de-centered specter. It solidifies traces by focusing on the ontic (entity, being, "terrorist") and in a supposedly graspable ontology (Being, purpose, function, "terrorism").

We are, then, surrounded by the illusion of a permanent (ontico-ontological) presence that informs analysts, decision-makers, journalists, scholars, public opinion, and disseminates a closed, ever-presence and truth. An illusion of a permanent presence that paves the way for wars, detentions, skyjackings, military

coups, mass deportations, torture, bans and assassinations (Winkler, 2006)[117]. That is why we must (and can) be attentive to its dangers.

Because of this, in this chapter, I argue that we *must* be suspicious of U.S. textiles towards "terror," for it is through iterability, supplementarity, *différance* – through the endless play of *traces* – that "Wars on Terrors" re-appear, are re-configured, re-instituted, perceived, remembered, thought of, accepted, rejected, discussed, archived, etc., in their supposed "reality" – "truth," "being," "presence" (Derrida, 1988; Zehfuss, 2003, 2004, 2009). In this sense, the first aim of this chapter is to explore, in section 3.2, the ideas of the "ontic," the "ontological" and the "hauntological" in order to show that not only are we surrounded by the illusion of permanent (ontico-ontological) presence, but also that we must (and can) be attentive to its dangers.

Accordingly, still in section 3.2, I explore the idea that differentiality cannot be ontico-ontologically instantiated (Duque-Estrada, 2020). More than that, I show that it is possible and preferable to think "hauntologically rather than ontologically" (Auchter, 2014, p. 4), and that, in so doing, we must pay attention to the *specters* that cannot be easily comprehended into already given dichotomies.

Then, in section 3.3, I expand my analysis and look for the *traces* of some of the U.S. endeavors against "terrorism" that take place before September 11, 2001; more specifically, I look at the 1980s and the 1990s – during which Ronald Reagan (1981-1989), George H. Bush (1989-1993), and William (Bill) Clinton's (1993-2001) administrations take place[118]. I believe this step is important because: 1) since

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[117] An interesting example lies in the book "*SOF Role in Combating Transnational Organized Crime.*" In this book, Colonel Mandrick wrote a chapter called "*An Ontological Framework for Understanding the Terror-Crime Nexus*." There, he proposes to "provide a semantic framework (i.e., ontology) that will enhance the counterterrorism analyst's ability to understand and describe the nexus between transnational terrorist organizations and criminal organizations." (2016, p. 148). In so doing, he aims at creating a framework that will inform analysts, decision-makers, and planners of counterterrorist operations. To see more: Mendel, William; Peter McCabe. SOF Role in Combating Transnational Organized Crime. Florida: The JSOU Press, 2016.

[118] Evidently, the U.S. narratives on "terrorism" that precede 2001 are not restricted to those years (1981-2001). As I emphasize on chapter 2, "'terrorism' is *not* a phenomenon that unexpectedly emerged in the 21st century – it did not emerge on September 11, 2001. It is *not* an unmodified concept, for as we observed with the help of Rapoport (2013), it was already considered a "phenomenon of subnational violence, a component of conflicts that do not involve states, a religious manifestation, and so on." Also, according to Tsui (2015) and Winkler (2006), at least since the Kennedy administration (1961-1963), the USA has continuously labeled adversaries abroad as "terrorists." In the same sense, internal political dissidents who opposed the Vietnam War were considered perpetrators of "terrorism." Also, it is possible to say that during Lyndon Johnson (1963-1969), Richard Nixon (1969-1974) and James (Jimmy) Carter's (1977-1981) administrations, the

I am developing a dissertation that insists on not reinforcing spatial-temporal boundaries, and, more than that, on distrusting sedimented boundaries, I should not (only) travel the same path that establishes September 11, 2001 as the landmark of the "War on Terror;" also, 2) I understand that "terrorism" and the "War on Terror" always already contain more meanings than might have been present in their "initial, ontico-ontological" context, that is, that of September 11, 2001. In this sense, this section works with the (already presented) idea that iterability is a "breaking force" (Derrida, 1988, p. 12) regarding commonly delimited contexts.

In section 3.4, I follow the theoretical-empirical-conceptual – discursive – tools presented in the previous sections in order to think *hauntologically* about "terrorism" in the USA. I do so with the help of official documents available at U.S. official websites, such as the National Security Strategies – a gaze directed to grand narratives and the Executive branch – as well as the Law Enforcement Bulletins, published by the FBI – an institution that is active since 1908 and that operates during different administrations – for these documents also provide me narratives concerning "terrorism." In this sense, I intend to show that there can be no "terrorism," "terrorist" nor "Wars on Terrors" without the appeal to ambiguities and without a *hauntological persistence* that is at work through iterability, *différance* and a center that escapes its own structurality. Finally, in section 3.5 I present some reflections that emerged in writing this chapter as well as the next steps I take.

3.2
The ontic, the ontological, the hauntological

By thinking "hauntologically rather than ontologically" (Auchter, 2014, p. 4) we can address the specters that cannot be easily comprehended into already given dichotomies. Nevertheless, before jumping directly into the critique, I think it is important to explain what I mean when I invoke *entities* (beings) and *Being*, that is, the "ontic" and the "ontological." For only after explaining what they "mean" and

threat of 'communism' was itself amalgamated with that of "terrorism." Going further back we can see how any kind of behavior that did not conform to what was considered normal and acceptable "terrorized" the USA/ what would become called the USA: indigenous peoples; the black enslaved population; Irish, Scottish, and German poor white servants; suffragist women; Latin immigrants; drug dealers, etc. (Zinn, 2015). Nevertheless, while I recognize that delimitations are violent choices, they have to be made so that the research is feasible. For, as Bennington puts it, "[w]e must begin somewhere; but there is no absolutely justified beginning" (1993. p. 15).

why I disagree with these attempts to conceive of "realities" such as those of "terrorist" and "terrorism," will I be able to explain why "hauntology" is a better path to think about "terrorism" in the U.S. foreign policy *textiles*. Allow me to elaborate further on this matter.

Whenever we write/talk about something, we are haunted by other specters or, as Badredine Arfi puts it: "we cannot build anything without relying on the shoulders of the previous/existing giants – so-called major works and defining texts and theories." (2012, p. 1). And just as this work is haunted by specters such as Jacques Derrida's and Reinhart Koselleck's, their trajectory is also haunted by so many other specters. Both Derrida's and Koselleck's writings, for example, are haunted by the works of Martin Heidegger, a German philosopher whose work is traditionally associated to "phenomenology" and "existentialism" and that has undoubtedly influenced contemporary philosophy.

Heidegger, in *Being and Time* (1996 [1926]), presents us the notions of the "ontic" and the "ontological," which are defined as "[…] two levels of analysis to *Dasein*" (Bunnin, Yu, 2004, p. 484). That is, they are assumed as two levels of analysis that regard presence, existence, *being-in-the-World* (Heidegger, 1996 [1926]). This distinction, between *entities* (being) and *Being*, appears in Heidegger's work as the ontic/ontological difference (Slaby, 2021a). And it is by working with and against these realms that, in the 1990s, Jacques Derrida's presents us with the idea of *hauntology* (Derrida, 2006 [1994]). We need, then, to try to understand the first pair of Heideggerian concepts, in order to work with the third Derridean *quasi*-concept, *quasi*-ontology: hauntology.

As I already mentioned in the previous chapters, besides diving into theoretical debates on certain concepts, I also think it is fruitful to look for their meanings in dictionaries. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "ontic" as "[o]f or relating to entities and the facts about them; having or relating to real as opposed to phenomenal existence. Cf. ontological, adj." (2023, n.p.). Merriam-Webster's dictionary, in turn, says that the word "ontic" means "of, relating to, or having real being" (2022, n.p.). The Online [Brazilian] Portuguese Dictionary, in turn, says that "ôntico" means:

> Particular to being, to the entity or to what really exists, and to its qualities. [Philosophy] Related to the (existing) entity that, for the German philosopher

> Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), is on the plane of its concrete existence and not of its nature, of being itself; it is opposed to the ontological, which refers to the nature of beings. [By Extension] In general terms, used to refer to appearance (material thing), as opposed to nature, to essence (2022, n.p., my translation)[119].

In this sense, the realm of the "ontic" takes into consideration certain concrete characteristics of an entity as such. The "ontic" applies, then, to the entity's arrangements, behaviors, qualities, and properties and to what can be known empirically about them (Slaby, 2021a, p. 542). Through these lenses, human beings, animals, objects are considered entities with specific, concrete characteristics and natures. In other words, "[…] when it comes to matters of this or that entity's concrete condition and properties, we're in the realm of the ontic" (Slaby, 2021a, p. 542).

Regarding the domain of "ontology," the Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "[o]f, relating to, or of the nature of ontology; metaphysical; (Theology) ontological argument n. the argument that God, being defined as the most…" (2023, n.p.). Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines it as "1: a branch of metaphysics concerned with the nature and relations of being. Ontology deals with abstract entities. 2: a particular theory about the nature of being or the kinds of things that have existence" (2022, n.p.). The Online [Brazilian] Portuguese Dictionary, in turn, says that "ontologia" means:

> […] Part of the philosophy that considers being in itself, in its *essence*, regardless of the way in which it manifests itself. [By Extension] Collection of concepts and definitions; representation of a shared concept. [...] [Philosophy] Part of the philosophy that is dedicated to the study of the most general characteristics of a being, separating them from the categorizations that obfuscate its *absolute essence*. [Philosophy] Reasoning about the more general meaning of being, exemplifying what makes the various existences possible [...] (2022, s.p., my translation, emphasis added)[120].

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[119] In the original: "Particular ao ser, ao ente ou ao que existe realmente, e às suas qualidades. [Filosofia] Relacionado a ente (existente) que, para o filósofo alemão Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), está no plano da sua existência concreta e não da sua natureza, do ser em si mesmo; opõe-se ao ontológico, ao que se refere à natureza do ente. [Por Extensão] Em termos gerais, usado para se referir à aparência (coisa material), por oposição à natureza, à essência." (Dicio, 2022, s.p.)

[120] In the original: "Ontologia substantivo feminino. Parte da filosofia que considera o ser em si mesmo, na sua essência, independentemente do modo em que se manifesta. [Por Extensão] Reunião de conceitos e definições; representação de um conceito compartilhado. [...] [Filosofia] Parte da filosofia que se dedica ao estudo das características mais gerais do ser, separando-as das categorizações que ofuscam sua essência absoluta. [Filosofia] Raciocínio sobre a significação mais geral do ser, exemplificando aquilo que faz com que seja possível as várias existências [...] (2022, s.p.)" (Dicio, 2022, s.p.).

In this sense, the "ontological" is concerned with the study of the Being of entities (Heidegger, 1996 [1926]). It is associated with "the specific way an entity of a certain kind has its characteristics" (Slaby, 2021b, p. 542). Also, according to Bunnin and Yu (2004, p. 489) "[t]he ontological level is […] concerned with the deep structure that underlies and instantializes the ontical."

The ontological, then, concerns, intimately, *being* (the ontic, the entity), for its function is to understand the "basic contours that delimit the possible ways for an entity of a certain kind to be […]" (Slaby, 2021b, p. 542). Also, "[…] ontology does not cover a regional sphere of the world, a particular realm, or ontic species of beings, but the very horizon of being in general (the ontological)" (Marchart, 2007, p. 162-163). "Ontology," in this sense, is attentive to what *is* (exists, becomes, is real); it tries to understand objects, proprieties, events, processes, relations and their varieties and structures. It seeks to define, disambiguate, and to classify entities.

Jan Slaby (2021a, 2021b) shows us a helpful example to illustrate the difference between the "ontic" and the "ontological." The author says that if we think about the word "equipment" in its "ontical" application, it may refer to lots of things we make use of in our everyday life. Equipment, in this sense, can comprise computers, books, remote controls, sheets of paper, cars, glasses, tables, cellphones, scissors, and so on. These "ontic" beings, however, do not only have physical characteristics. On the contrary, they are encompassed by an "ontological" constitution, for they are "available and useful for […]" whenever we need them (p. 544). They are both available (ontically concrete), and meaningful and purposeful (ontologically characterized). *In the equipment lies their "equipmentality"* (Slaby, 2021a, p. 552).

However, this relationship does not mean that "equipmentality" is a piece of equipment. On the contrary, it encompasses, permeates, penetrates, and slices through them. From this perspective, the relationship between the "ontic" and the "ontological" could be summarized by the idea that "to know something (ontic comportment) presupposes understanding it (ontological comportment)" (Slaby, 2021a, p. 545).

However, as I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, this attempt to classify *entities* and *Being* is problematic. In this sense, after briefly presenting the notions of the "ontic" and the "ontological" we could wonder: what is the problem of this assessment? The problem is: it looks for closure, pure presence, and imposes

violent structures, dichotomies and hierarchies. This way, the "ontic" and "ontological," focused on *entities*, *Being*, the observable, the structure, the concrete, the essence, permeate many discussions and policies on "terrorism" that rehearse ready/closed responses/that claim to "exhaust" the subject –see Chapter 2, as well as the next sections. In this sense, when the "other" – the "terrorist" – is announced as such "[i.e., as something, as an entity, as a 'what' or a 'who,' defined or definable […] (Duque-Estrada, 2020, p. 26),[121] "it is presented in the *dissimulation* of itself" (Derrida, 2016, p. 201, my adaptation)[122].

Image 1: Conceived by the author, elaborated by Losleyne Milani[123].

[121] In the original: [i.e., como algo, um ente, um "quê" ou "quem", definido ou definível]" (Duque-Estrada, 2020, p. 26)

[122] In the original: "When the other announces itself as such, it presents itself in the dissimulation of itself." (Derrida, 2016, p. 201).

[123] Even though I can conceive some illustrations mentally, I cannot bring them to life. I lack any kind of knowledge in designing/editing images, but I am lucky enough to be surrounded by generous and talented friends. This way, I would like to thank my friend Lois for all images presented in this dissertation. Not only did she understand what I was trying to conceive, but she also was extraordinarily kind and made the visual representations of my words better than I ever could.

We cannot understand, see, and grasp boundaries, identities, entities and Being in their entirety – we can pay attention to their traces though (Williams, 2005). Accordingly, we must bear in mind that "the" difference and identity – of "terrorists" and "terrorism" – cannot be understood in terms of being/reality/ pure presence or pure absence. However, we can pay attention to what happens at the boundaries, borders and limits of their representations (Ashley, 1987; Vaughan-Williams, 2009; Walker, 2009; Lindahl, 2013). For, if we are distrustful of foundations, dichotomies and hierarchies – Image 1–, we may guard against pure presence, pay attention to the ungraspable traces of limits, to continuous attempts to asymmetrically discriminate against an-*other* and understand that every-*thing* can be subject to fission.

As Marchart (2007) puts it, ontology could only be conceivable in the form of Derrida's "hauntology," because it is an

> ontology haunted by the spectre of its own absent ground [and, more than that] […] The never-ending play of the difference between ontological being and the realm of ontic beings injects a "ground/abyss" of radical instability into the field of being, and thus into the discipline of ontology. It is only in the sense of hauntology, that is to say, as an ontology lacking its very object (being-as-ground), that the term ontology may still be employed (2007, p. 163).

However, instead of choosing the same word, that is, Marchart's "ontology," I choose to follow Derrida's deconstructive move and to speak of *haunt*ology. "Enter the ghost, exit the ghost, re-enter the ghost" (Derrida, 2006 [1994], p. 11). Enter "terrorism," exit "terrorism," re-enter "terrorism." I prefer to think of the ungraspable, which slips, escapes, eludes and haunts. I prefer to think of the *hauntological* – quasi-ontological.

In this sense, hauntology

> […] replaces the place of Being in ontology with the non-place of the trace or specter [...]. Thus, contrary to occupying the place of Being, the trace destitutes and de-structures the very place of "place," completely disseminating any possibility of ontologism (Haddock-Lobo, 2011, p. 91, my translation)[124].

[124] In the original: "[…] substituiria o lugar do Ser na ontologia pelo não lugar do rastro ou do espectro [...] Assim, ao contrário de ocupar o lugar do Ser, o rastro destitui e desestrutura o próprio lugar do 'lugar', disseminando por completo qualquer possibilidade de ontologismo" (Haddock-Lobo, 2011, p. 91).

Hauntology is neither present nor absent, neither alive nor dead. For it deconstructs –i.e., it shakes the foundations of – ontico-ontological presence. It perceives contingency – the impossibility of a final ground (Marchart, 2007) – in a groundless ground (Yamato, 2021) upon which it would be impossible to sediment the ontico-ontological presence of "terrorism." The ontico-ontological presence leaves the scene; the trace, and the specter – the hauntological – take the stage in the next section.

3.2.1
"The" hauntological

> Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated.
>
> President George W. Bush (September 20, 2001, n.p.).

> […] make no mistake, our nation is still threatened by terrorists. […] we must define our effort not as a boundless "global war on terror," but rather as a series of persistent, targeted efforts to dismantle specific networks of violent extremists that threaten America […] the United States is at war with *al-Qaeda*, the Taliban, and their associated forces.
>
> Barack Obama (2013, n.p.).

> No evil force on Earth can match the noble power and righteous glory of the American warrior. […] We are ending the era of endless wars […] We are not the policemen of the world. But let our enemies be on notice: If our people are threatened, we will never, ever hesitate to act. And when we fight, from now on, we will fight only to win. As MacArthur said: "In war, there is no substitute for victory."
>
> Donald Trump (2020, n.p).

> The dream of justice for all will be deferred no longer. A cry for survival comes from the planet itself, a cry that can't be any more desperate or any more clear. And now, a rise of political extremism, White supremacy, domestic terrorism that we must confront and we will defeat. To overcome these challenges—to restore the soul and secure the future of America—requires so much more than words. It requires the most elusive of all things in a democracy: unity.
>
> Joseph Biden (2020, n.p.).

Derrida sustains that we need to be permanently vigilant towards every single assumption or claim of meanings "that precedes the reference – through a 'signifier' – associated with it" (Duque-Estrada, 2020, p. 21, my translation)[125]. In other words, we must be attentive to the illusion of its permanent presence (p. 22), for

[125] In the original: "[...] que precedesse a referência – através de um 'significante' – a ele associada" (Duque-Estrada, 2020, p. 21).

"the removal of such an idea [that of a signified existing in and by itself] is the removal of a metaphysical illusion *par excellence*: the illusion of presence" (Duque-Estrada, 2020, p. 22)[126]. This way, we must pay attention to "the very idea of the sign [that can] 'take place' in its intelligibility, before its 'fall,' before any expulsion into the exteriority of the sensible here below." (Derrida, 2016, p. 155). That is why, in this dissertation, my intention is not only to question the idea of a "War on Terror" but to complicate it.

As Paulo César Duque-Estrada (2020) puts it:

> With the disruption of the hierarchical structure […] the meaning, supposedly existing in and by itself, will actually show itself as a signifier performing the function of a signified. Thus, as a signifier, by its very referential nature, it is always associated with other signifiers within a system; that is, it is always signifier of a signifier. [...] It is clear, says Derrida, that the referential character of the "signifier of the signifier" is, effectively, intrinsic to the movement of language itself (p. 23-24, my translation).[127]

Following this position, and still according to Duque-Estrada (2020), we can understand that, if we look at a "signifier"

> in the light of the silent, structural, and destabilizing turbulence that crosses […] every hierarchy […] we realize that: outside the referential system in which it occupies a certain 'place,' a signifier remains completely indeterminate; it simply does not perform any function of a signifier (Duque-Estrada, 2020, p. 24, my translation)[128].

In this sense, it is possible to understand that a "signifier" only plays its role within the system to which it belongs, and considering the position it occupies *vis à vis* all the other "signifiers" in the very same system. This way, if a "signifier"

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[126] In the original: "[…] a remoção, pois de tal ideia é a remoção de uma ilusão metafísica por excelência: a ilusão da presença" (Duque-Estrada, 2020, p. 22).

[127] In the original: "[…] com a perturbação da estrutura hierárquica [...] o significado, supostamente existente em si mesmo e por si mesmo, vai se mostrar, em verdade, como um significante desempenhando a função de um significado. Assim como significante, pela sua própria natureza referencial, ele se encontra sempre associado a outros significantes dentro de um sistema; isto é, ele é sempre significante de um significante [...] Fica claro, diz Derrida, que o caráter referencial de 'significante do significante' é, efetivamente, intrínseco ao próprio movimento da linguagem" (Duque-Estrada, 2020, p. 23-24).

[128] In the original: "[...] se olharmos para o significante, à luz da turbulência silenciosa, estrutural e desestabilizadora que atravessa [...] toda hierarquia [...] realizamos que: fora do sistema referencial em que ocupa um determinado "lugar", um significante permanece completamente indeterminado; ele simplesmente não desempenha nenhuma função de significante" (Duque-Estrada, 2020, p. 24).

cannot generate a signified that is enough in itself, there cannot also be something like "the signifier" either (Duque-Estrada, 2020, p. 24). This is what Bennington (2000, p. 33-34) calls "the privilege of the signifier," for in not being able to reach a closed "signified," every "signifier" only works in referring to other "signifiers."

That is why whenever we look up at the dictionary for any "signifier," we will always only find an endless and diffuse chain of "signifiers" that will lead us to other "signifiers" – *différance* is at work. This way, the "signifier" remains undetermined. It remains a "signifier" between quotation marks.

In this sense, if each "signifier" carries within itself the *trace* of other "signifiers" within its system, we must stop talking about a "signifier," either inside or outside quotation marks, and chose to work with the ideas of a *trace* that *haunts* through a condition of *spectrality* (Derrida, 2006 [1994]). It is then important to note that a trace operates through a system of differences. In other words, traces "'are' what they 'are' as a result of differences between 'themselves:' which is to say that, at the heart of any and all 'signifiers' […] dwells a 'differentiality,' or rather, a production, a game, of differences" (Duque-Estrada, 2020, p. 25, my translation)[129].

In other words, and as Derrida (1981, p. 26) declares:

> This interweaving results in each "element" – phoneme or grapheme – being constituted on the basis of the trace within it of the other elements of the chain or system. This interweaving, this *textile*, is the text produced only in the transformation of another text. Nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces.

As I pointed out in Chapter 2, there can be no "terrorism," "terrorist," nor "Wars on Terrors" without the appeal to ambiguities and without a *persistence* that is at work through iterability, *différance*, supplementarity, asymmetrical counterconceptual iterability, and a center that escapes its own structurality. For with them lies the possibility of a "sign" – and "signifiers" and "signifieds" – always being/invoking an-*other* thing in its sameness and, at the same time, being repeated while being transformed – a transformation in which some*thing* survives.

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[129] In the original: "Rastros 'são' o que 'são' em função das diferenças entre 'eles'; o que quer dizer que, no cerne de todo e qualquer 'significante' ou 'significado' [...] habita uma 'diferencialidade', ou melhor, uma produção, um jogo, de diferenças." (Duque-Estrada, 2020, p. 25).

Also, as I showed before, it is important not only to pay attention to the effects of boundaries, borders and limits – such as those of "democracy" *versus* "barbarism," "security" *versus* "terrorism," "friend" *versus* "enemy," "human" *versus* "terrorist," and so on – but also to consider them as something ungraspable and open for variations. In such a way, we challenge supposedly *stable* "truths" and values – i.e., we challenge the politics of ontology and the politics of presence (Campbell, 1998; Zehfuss, 2004). This way, even though we cannot grasp and close limits, we can look for their traces (Williams, 2005, p. 3). In so doing, we can try to understand how, through "contacts and contrasts," "conflicts and compromises," asymmetrical demarcations can come to live and allow for politically violent expressions to survive and inflict harm (Koselleck, 2004).

Therefore, I understand that if identities and differences cannot be ontico-ontologically instantiated, it is possible and desirable to think hauntologically. As such, I draw attention to the *specters* that cannot be easily comprehended into already given dichotomies.[130] This way, by taking into consideration Jessica Auchter's (2014) suggestion to think hauntologically rather than ontico-ontologically, I follow the idea that "hauntology offers a way of supplanting ontology […]" (p. 5) and that, in the same sense, "the "specter is familiar to us precisely because it is the remnant of ontology, of the creation of being." (p. 17). In other words, and as Davis (2005, p. 373) puts it "[h]auntology supplants its near-homonym ontology, replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the *ghost* as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive."

As Auchter (2014, p. 17) shows us, to think hauntologically means to think beyond "ontology." This way, hauntology "asks after the processes by which is it constructed, and in doing so implicates the practices of modern *statecraft*'." In this sense, we must pay attention to the idea that the state tries to enforce (or to craft) "pure ontologies" (p. 20). For it is through the process of *statecrafting* that the state works in order to forget the performativity through which it sustains itself and its practices (Doty, 1996). However, and as Derrida argues in *Specters of Marx* (2006

[130] The specter, in this sense, is a quasi-concept and it is "[...] called a quasi-concept precisely because it does not allow a precise, clear, and distinct definition, a decidability" (Haddock-Lobo, 2011, p. 49, my translation). In the original: "[…] chamado de quase-conceito exatamente por não permitir uma definição precisa, clara e distinta, uma decidibilidade" (Haddock-Lobo, 2011, p. 49).

[1994]), we must keep in mind that the specter is visible and invisible; intelligible and unintelligible; and controllable and uncontrollable – all at once.

Image 2 – Supplanting Ontology: Conceived by the author, elaborated by Losleyne Milani.

In this realm of both visibility and invisibility, intelligibility and unintelligibility, controllability and uncontrollability, Devetak (2005) calls our attention to what he calls "the gothic scene," in international relations. In this scene, monsters and ghosts would be responsible for tormenting the senses. And how would they do so? In generating "anxieties, fear, and terror" (p. 621).

Devetak (2005) illustrates this argument by analyzing George W. Bush discourses. He highlights that they describe "terrorists" as well as "rogue states" as "equally dark, perverse and indomitable forces [...] ineffable and potently violent and cruel forces [that] haunt and terrorise the civilised, human world" (p. 621). In this sense, ghosts and monsters would provide an "aesthetic of unrest," that is, an aesthetic in the sense of the possibility of being "equated with dark fictional

narratives that turn around haunted houses, ghosts, monsters, and the undead" as well as to "images of architectural ruins, and silhouetted trees, leafless and lifeless, shrouded in mist" (p. 622). This aesthetic of unrest, in turn, would make room for a state of unrest, i.e., constant confusion, anxiety, worry, uneasiness, and restlessness. We could say, then, that these gothic scenes allow for process of statecrafting which promise to hunt ungraspable monsters and ghosts, and to protect the supposed unity of what is good, desirable, and humane.

However, it is important to note that, as Postone (1998) indicates, specters – ghosts and monsters – represent temporalities which cannot be adequately comprehended in terms of *present time*, for these temporalities include a *past* that has not passed yet and also a *future* yet to come that breaks with the present (p. 2). In this sense, hauntology can be thought of as some*thing* historical, but not dated in "the chain of presents, day after day, according to the instituted order of a calendar" (Derrida, 2006 [1994], p. 3). On the contrary, in thinking hauntologically, "time is out of joint" (p. 219). In this sense, it involves entangled, spectral temporalities:

> Repetition and first time: this is perhaps the question of the event as question of the ghost. What is a ghost? What is the effectivity or the presence of a specter, that is, of what seems to remain as ineffective, virtual, insubstantial as a simulacrum? Is there, between the thing itself and its simulacrum, an opposition that holds up? Repetition and first time, but also repetition and last time, since the singularity of any first time, makes of it also a last time. Each time it is the event itself, a first time is a last time. Altogether other. […] Let us call it a hauntology. This logic of haunting would not be merely larger and more powerful than an ontology or a thinking of Being (of the "to be," assuming that it is a matter of Being in the "to be or not to be," but nothing is less certain). It would harbor within itself, but like circumscribed places or particular effects, eschatology, and teleology themselves. It would comprehend them, but incomprehensibly (Derrida, 2006 [1994], p. 10).

Hauntology is, then, a question of iterability (and first time, and last time, and first time…), like the ghosts and monsters that habitually return again and again (Derrida, 2006; Devetak, 2005). "Enter the ghost, exit the ghost, re-enter the ghost" (Derrida, 2006 [1994], p. 11) In this sense, if we wonder "what is the time and what is the history of a specter?" (Derrida, 2006 [1994], p. 48), and if we wonder "what is the time and what is the history of a specter such as that of "terrorism" that haunts the U.S. foreign policy?" we can assume that "there are reasons to doubt this reassuring order of presents and, especially, the borders between the present, the

actual or present reality of the present, and everything that can be opposed to it: absence, non-presence, non-effectivity, inactuality, virtuality, or even the simulacrum in general, and so forth" (Derrida, 2006 [1994], p. 48).

In *Specters of Marx* (2006 [1994]) editors Magnus and Cullenberg say that "[t]he proper names 'Marx' and/or 'Marxism' have always already been plural nouns, despite their grammatical form, and despite the fact that they have already been understood" (p. xi). In the same sense, I believe that the proper names "terrorism" and "War on Terror" have already been plural nouns – "terrorisms" and "Wars on Terrors" – despite their grammatical form, and despite how they have already been understood. And, because of that, when thinking about the U.S. wars against "terrorisms," we could only talk about some ghost [*s'entretenir de quelque fantôme*] (Derrida, 2006 [1994], p. xvii). For the ghost, the specter, that is, "terrorism," as well as "Wars on Terrors" are "neither substance, nor essence, nor existence, […] never present as such" (p. xvii). They elude certainty, presence, and truth (Auchter, 2014, p. 3). They are always differed and deferred, supplemented… In this sense, "terrorism" haunts U.S. foreign policy, for the USA continuously attempts to ontico-ontologically instantiate its remains, to make them present and, at the same time, to eliminate its specters once and for all.

As articulated by Bonditti (2014, p. 206), "that which is threatening indeed never sorts under the order of the effective, of the actual […] of what happens, but always under the order of the potential in the sense of what exists virtually, of what is to come." Similar to enigmatic specters that elude full understanding within the confines of *present time* – as they encompass a *past* that remains unfulfilled and a future yet to unfold (Postone, 1998) – the time of "terrorism" is also *out of joint*.

Enters "terrorism," exits "terrorism," re-enters "terrorism:" In 2021, after the disastrous US withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, discussions on the "War on Terror" gained new attention. The *Foreign Affairs Magazine* for example, released, in September 2021 – exactly 20 years after September 11, 2001 attacks – the issue *Who won the War on Terror?* Among its articles, Nelly Lahoud (2021, p. 10-21) points out "Bin Laden's Catastrophic Success;" Ben Rhodes (2021, p. 22-31) laments that, through a logic of "[t]hem and Us […] How America lets its enemies hijack its Foreign Policy;" and Daniel Byman (2021, p. 32-43), in turn, analyzes what he calls a "good enough doctrine" and points out that American

counterterrorism has learned to "manage, rather than eliminate, the terrorist threat" (p. 43) and that, in so doing, it has been "[l]earning how to live with terrorism."

These were not the only analyses pointing to the same direction[131]. An article published by Chris Moody at *Al Jazeera* on September 8, 2021, and titled *Twenty years after 9/11, did US win its "war on terror"?* reunites quotes from "experts" on "terrorism" such as Bruce Hoffman, a senior fellow for Counterterrorism and Homeland Security at the Council for Foreign Relations; Seth G. Jones, director of the International Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies; and Stephen Wertheim, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

In this article, Hoffman (2021 apud Moody, 2021 n.p.) says that "[w]e've seen repeatedly over the past 20 years how we counter a terror threat in one region and then, opportunistically, a concatenation of events enables terrorists to migrate and take hold of another region." Jones (2021 apud Moody, 2021, n.p.), in turn, seems worried that "[t]hey're in more places than they were in 2001. There's no question."[132] Finally, Wertheim (2021 apud Moody, 2021, n.p.) seems to express himself in a more denunciatory way, for he says that "[t]he war in Afghanistan has ended with a repudiation of the era of major military operations to remake other countries."

They all seem to agree, however, that "[t]he war is not over in any way, shape or form" (Jones, 2021, apud Moody, 2021, n.p.). Especially because after the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, that happened at the same time of the U.S. troops withdrawal, this scenario could, in their view, increase the presence of "anti-US groups to organize and proliferate in a way they have not been able to in years." (Moody, 2021, n.p.). In this sense, they also seem to agree that there is less sense

[131] There are many other places that could be explored in order to illustrate this argument. To name only two, we could take a look at New America, a think tank founded in 1999, that released a report called "*Terrorism in America After 9/11*" in 2020, which tries to identify "Who are the terrorists targeting the United States? Why do they engage in terrorism in the first place? And what threat do they pose?." See: https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/terrorism-in-america/>. Also, the United States Bureau of Counterterrorism presents abundant sources of analysis including, for example, annual "*Country Reports on Terrorism*." See: <https://www.state.gov/country-reports-on-terrorism-2/>.

[132] In this case, when he says that "they are," he is referring to "terrorist" groups, for he states that "[t]he emergence of a Taliban government does raise prospects about Afghanistan again becoming a sanctuary for terrorist groups" and that "The war is not over in any way, shape, or form. Targeted killings are ongoing. There will be active resistance […] These wars are not going away. This is at least a generational struggle" (Jones, 2021 *apud* Moody, 2021, n.p.).

of security today in the USA, for Hoffman (apud Moody, 2021, n.p.) confesses that "[i]t's hard to look at the world today from the United States and feel any sense of safety, security, or any kind of contentment […] Unfortunately, I think the sad truth and the irony is, we're less safe, given the multiplicity of threats to the United States today." Also, as Kurtz-Phelan (2021), editor of *The Foreign Affairs Magazine* says, not only was this central fixation of the U.S. foreign policy, that is, a victory in the "War on Terror," costly, but it also left open the question of "what winning means."

Following these reflections I mentioned, and adding and mixing them with what I said in the previous chapter, we could come back to some important points regarding the theoretical approach chosen here. As I acknowledged in Chapter 2, section 2.3, foreign policy is taken here as "all those practices of differentiation implicated in the confrontation between self and other, and their modes of figuration" (Campbell, 1998 p. 881) and as "a specific sort of interpretive performance with overlapping effects" (Ashley, 1987, p. 53). It relies upon and operates through boundaries, borders and limits (Ashley, 1987; Walker, 2009; Lindahl, 2013).

It is possible, then, to see how the U.S. foreign policy – and its "experts" have *been* recogniz*ing* a need to empower their country in order to fight an "enemy," that is, "terrorism" through a "War on Terror" (Moody, 2021), no matter how long it takes, no matter how long it persists (Bush, 2001; NSS, 2002, 2010, 2015; NSCDT, 2021; Obama, 2013; Trump, 2020; Biden, 2020); a need to differentiate themselves from that an-*other* threatening "terrorist" such as a "successful Bin Laden," "the Taliban that took over Afghanistan," or "jihadist groups that may proliferate and make the USA less safe;" as well as a need to secure their boundaries in continuously attempting not to let "enemies to hijack their foreign policy" (Byman, 2021; Lahoud, 2021; Rhodes, 2021). *Différance*, supplementarity, asymmetry, counterconcepts, deconstruction, boundary-producing-political-performances, hauntology: all of them seem to be at work.

Considering the idea that the trace always has a referential structure – i.e., that every trace is always a trace of a trace (of a trace), and that "all reality has the structure of a differential trace, and that one cannot refer to this 'real' except in an interpretive experience" (Derrida, 1988, p. 148) – it follows that "terrorism" as well as the "War on Terror" could be thought of differently. This way, the "War on Terror" could be though of from an open field of endless remittances.

Conceiving the possibility of this endless quality, we acknowledge there is an inexhaustible creation of ever new references, but also that each and every single of its references never reach their final term (Duque-Estrada, 2020). In this sense, we acknowledge that the "Wars on Terrors" seem to have both an unprecedented "nature" and (hi)stories that feel oddly familiar: they operate like crusades against a ghostly enemy, a shadowy network, an unformed specter (Devetak, 2005, p. 638; Ruback and Carlson, 2023).

As Haddock-Lobo (2011) puts it,

> The scene, like every scene, is historical, it stages a story, and it stages the history of historicity itself, but according to an obsession that does not have a date and cannot allow itself to be chained according to the chronology of the present. The day or hour of the apparition cannot be marked on the calendar; and furthermore […] the apparition never "arrives," it is so untimely: in fact, the apparition, the phenomenalization, of the ghost does not occur […] (p. 67, my translation)[133].

The "War on Terror" is a proper name that changes but persists (Derrida, 1988; Koselleck, 2004; 2018). It is preceded by the article "the", implying political, ideological and social singularization (Koselleck, 2004, p. 156). More than that, it is crossed by destabilizing, silent, asymmetrical and iterable structural temporalities which cannot be adequately grasped in terms of *present time* and *pure presence*, for it includes a *past* that has not passed yet, that is, that survives September 11, 2001, for we have not forgotten it (Derrida in Borradori, 2003; Zehfuss, 2003) and that also deals with a *future-to-come* (*l-à-venir*), "terrorism," a threat that may harm the USA at any time and place.

The "War on Terror" is an "instant-now." In so being, to try to grasp its presence/present would be "forbidden by its very nature: the present slips away and the instant too" (Lispector, 2012, p. 3). This instant now is "turned toward the future, going toward it, it also comes from it, it proceeds from [*provient de*] the future" (Derrida, 2006 [1994], p. xix).

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[133] In the original: "A cena, como toda cena, é histórica, encena uma estória e encena a história mesma da historicidade, mas segundo uma obsessão que não *data* e nem pode se permitir encadear de acordo com uma cronologia do presente. Não se pode marcar no calendário o dia ou a hora da aparição; e, além disso, como se verá um pouco adiante, a aparição nunca 'chega', de tão intempestiva: na verdade, não ocorre a aparição do fantasma, uma fenomenalização [..]" (Haddock-Lobo, 2011, p. 67).

This way, instead of the "War on Terror", here I think of "Wars on Terrors." In so doing, I acknowledge specters that "[…] always return […] always start by returning" and which "comings and goings" as well as "appearances" no one could ever control (Haddock-Lobo, 2011, p. 76-77, my translation)[134]. In this sense, it is possible to declare, once again, that the "terrorism" against which the U.S. wages wars has always already been traversed by *différance*: it has always already been in the process of being differentiated – from "democratic" and "right" actions, for example – and deferred – as it is invoked, yet not defined, from time to time. That is, the "terrorism" of these "Wars on Terrors" seem to walk hand in hand with different, deferred, spectral "dangerous" manifestations.

This way, we can see the (re)production of boundaries, borders and limits. These processes help in dictating the know-how and in making all aspects of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" into truths recognized as familiar and natural – may they come from experts, Presidents, or National Security Strategies, or any other authoritative source. Also, in a never-ending process of differing and deferring, which does not happen between identifiable things – "we" do not know exactly who "they" are and who "we" are, even though "we" try to act and say otherwise – these "Wars on Terrors," as well as "terrorism," seem more and more ungraspable and open for variation.

We can only look at their traces and expressions, but we could never take a bright, static, high definition picture of any of them. We can only conceive "Wars on Terrors" on the realm of "the" hauntological. That is why I mistrust proper names and the "ontico-ontological" presence. Rather, I prefer to shake proper names, as they lack a fully present center – may they be "terrorism," "September 11," "War on Terror," "the United States of America," etc.

In this sense, we can understand that the "Wars on Terrors," as a specter –or many specters – that haunts and eludes, persistently, U.S. foreign policy. These "Wars on Terrors" offer plots, draw arbitrary boundaries, and make us forget what is / was left out, such as those places and peoples struck by violent long-term consequences.

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[134] In the original: "Um espectro é sempre um retornante, ele sempre começa por retornar e é por esta razão que não se pode controlar suas idas e vindas, suas aparições" (Haddock-Lobo, 2011, p. 77).

And how has that been happening? In aggregating different profiles of external threats and framing them in the so-called *axis of evil*; in invading Iraq and Afghanistan; in capturing and assassinating Osama bin Laden; in targeting *al-Qaeda* and its allies; in using drones and targeting countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan; in assassinating Anwar al-Awlaki; in fighting ISIS; in keeping Guantánamo bay detention center open and holding indefinitely detainees without formally accusing them of committing "terrorist acts;" in establishing immigration barriers; in sending additional extra forces to Afghanistan to fight Taliban; in assassinating Qasem Soleimani; and in trying to confront and defeat the rise in "political extremism," "antifascism," "white supremacy" and "domestic terrorism."

Coming back to where we once were and repeating *ipsis litteris* the argument of this dissertation: "Wars on Terrors" consist of opaque, blurred figures in the U.S. foreign policy: a structure with a center that has no natural site and that keeps being re-fulfilled, re-written and re-signified (Campbell, 1998; Derrida, 1978); a specter-*to-come* that haunts (Derrida, 2006) and *eludes* US foreign policies; and that benefits from images of "faceless" and "de-territorialized" strange, alien outside(r)s – i.e. enemies whose faces, characteristics, and territories are only provisionally *identified;* from the impossibility of definitely defining what "terror" and "terrorists" mean and are; and from the entanglement of these signifiers (which benefited from drawing the color line), over the U.S. history, with those of "Indigenous Peoples," the "Black enslaved population," the "poor white servants (Irish, Scottish, Germans)," "Suffragist women," "Latin immigrants," "drug dealers," "Muslims," "Arabs," "Africans," and so on (Said, 2007; Zinn, 2015).

As I mentioned during Chapter 2, origins and beginnings are obscure. They are also, according to Devetak (2005) ineffable, for everything "begins undetected, in unsuspecting or dark places, often unexpectedly or accidentally [...]" (p. 622). And even though we can observe residual traces, they remain ungraspable (p. 622). That is why it is possible to consider ghosts, as well as monsters, as creatures who challenge boundaries (p. 624) of presence, life, and normality. They are specters; "we" can only observe their traces, and, even so, these traces haunt "us".

What does survive in this scene? The asymmetric structure of the argument: "we" must defeat these ungraspable ghosts and monsters, these "terrorists" that "terrorize" "us." Ghosts whose presence "we" cannot delineate, only fear; whose lives are not comparable to "ours," for they are bare lives (Agamben, 1998) or

precarious lives (Butler, 2019); whose behaviors are abnormal; whose pain do not matter (and are not *matter*); whose absence "we" desire, but cannot live without, for their presence and fearing their presence define who "we" are.

And what do I mean by that? Following Devetak's (2005) reading of Julia Kristeva, it is possible to understand that monsters and ghosts are abject – as in opposed to being a subject. This way, there are constant attempts to eject, expel, banish, throw away and radically exclude the abject "other." Interestingly, however, the abject "other" could "never be entirely banished or obliterated; instead, it hovers at the edges of the subject's existence, threatening its unity and identity with disruption and possible dissolution" (Devetak, 2005, p. 633).

This way, "[m]onsters [and ghosts] may reveal as much about ourselves as they do about external reality […] By providing visible warnings of the results of vice and folly, monsters offer a negative definition of civility, virtue, and the good" (Devetak, 2005, p. 642)[135]. "Terrorism" as well as "terrorists" are, in this sense, monsters, ghosts, abject "others" – for they are spectral, elusive, enigmatic, shapeless, uncontainable, and untraceable (p. 637) "beings" and "Beings" constantly threatening to disturb a supposed unity.

By treating "terrorists" and "terrorism" as elusive enemies, places like the USA pave the way for taking their armed forces as well as forcing their legal system into people's lives in other places – as well as at home – "for seemingly indefinite periods of time, without abrogating sovereignty or declaring war on the country suddenly awash with foreign soldiers" (Ruback and Carlson, 2023, p. 23). This way, the "ghostliness of an elusive target" (p. 23) authorize militarized manhunts, detentions, torture, exterminations, banishments, and radical exclusions (Ruback and Carlson, 2023). However, it is important to point out that although they are treated as monsters and ghosts, people are not literally any of them. They can be found, detained, tortured, feel pain, feel frightened, miss their relatives, and be killed; they are born, they age, and they die.

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[135] It is interesting "[…] recalling the etymological connection between monster and demonstration. The Latin *monstrare* means to show or reveal […] Monsters help to reinforce boundaries between self and other, civilisation and barbarism, good and evil […] But monsters have the unsettling effect of destabilising the very categories and oppositions that […] others presuppose […]: that the gothic scene is the symbolic site of a culture's discursive struggle to define and claim possession of the civilised, and to abject, or throw off what is seen as other to that civilised self. Monsters […] are a sign of the impossibility of once and for all eliminating contestation over the meanings of civilisation, good and evil, freedom and tyranny, and so on. (Devetak, 2005, p. 642)

As I said in the beginning of this section, we need to be attentive when it comes to every single assumption or claim of meanings "that precedes the reference – through a 'signifier' [i.e., trace] – associated with it" (Duque-Estrada, 2020, p. 21, my translation). That is why, from the beginning of this dissertation, I argue that we *must* be suspicious of U.S. discourses towards "terrorism." Following, once again, Derrida: we must always be aware of the compulsion to repeat and to persist, for this phenomenon applies to every*thing*.

It is important now to expand my analysis and look for the *traces* of U.S. endeavors against "terrorism" that take place before September 11, 2001. For the U.S. "War*s* on Terror*s*" always already contain more meanings than those initially presented to us. In this sense, the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" break with commonly delimited contexts.

3.3

Breaking with context: Writing Security, Eluding Security, Haunting Security

"We must begin somewhere; but there is no absolutely justified beginning" (Bennington, 1993, p. 15). As already highlighted, in this research I do not work with the idea of an original point of departure, creation or existence – I do not work with foundations. Rather, I follow the postfoundational thought which sees an ontological weakening of grounds; which sees groundless grounds (Marchart, 2007; Yamato, 2021). However, it is important to say that this weakening of grounds should not lead us to the assumption that there is a total absence of grounds, but, rather, an impossibility of a final, totalizing one (Marchart, 2007, p. 2). In this sense, I presuppose that everything – and here, specifically, "terrorism" and the "Wars on Terrors" – is unceasingly on the move and already contaminated and disseminated (Haddock-Lobo, 2011).

In *A People's History of the United States*, Howard Zinn says that

> It is not that [we] can avoid emphasis of some facts and not of others. This is as natural […] as to the mapmaker, who, in order to produce a usable drawing for practical purposes, must first flatten and distort the shape of the earth, then choose out of the bewildering mass of geographic information those things needed for the purpose of this or that particular map. [However] we must not accept the memory of states as our own. Nations are not communities and never have been. The history of any country, presented as the history of a family,

> conceals fierce conflicts of interest (sometimes exploding, most often repressed) between conquerors and conquered, masters and slaves, capitalists and workers, dominators and dominated in race and sex. And in such a world of conflict, a world of victims and executioners, it is the job of thinking people, as Albert Camus suggested, not to be on the side of the executioners (Zinn, 2015, p. 10)

And "[…] since there is no determined, correct, true starting point, you can start from wherever you want" (Haddock-Lobo, 2011, 28, my translation)[136]. What is left for me to do, then, is to justify my procedures and choices for this section: to work with some traces of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors," for neither it is possible to locate pure origins of "terrorism" nor of the U.S. endeavors against "terrorism." In so doing, I do not re-trace its complete trajectory. It would be impossible. Rather, I look at how some of its specters have already been haunting the USA.

Accordingly, even if looking at the 21st century is the central aim of this research, I understand that it is important to look for traces of the U.S. endeavors against "terrorism" that took place before September 11, 2001. And why is that? Because even if we observe that, for the USA, "with the coordinated terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., on September 11, 2001, the threat of terrorism rose to the top of the country's national security and law enforcement agendas," it is no secret that "even before these catastrophic events, terrorism was a growing national security and law enforcement concern" (USA General Accounting Office, 2001, p. 4).

This way, I am aware that in the 21st century "the question of violence has mainly been brought to us by the grand narrative on 'terrorism' and the necessity to eradicate […] the 'new political and strategic enemy' […], an enemy against which this same administration decided to wage a 'Global War on Terror' (GWOT)" (Bonditti, 2014 p. 192). However, I take a step back and I pay attention to the 1980s and the 1990s and, in so doing, I show that I distrust those sedimented borders that establish a spatial-temporal "beginning" to the "War on Terror" – as if it were a particular "War" waged against specific enemies during a limited amount of time. That being the case, I demonstrate that the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" always

[136] In the original: "E, não havendo ponto de partida determinado, correto, verdadeiro, pode-se começar de onde se quiser" (Haddock-Lobo, 2011, p. 28).

already contain more meanings than might have been present in their "initial" / "ontological" context[137], that is, that of September 11, 2001 (Bonditti, 2014).

In taking this step back, I do not deny that an event – as in something that "exceeds calculation, rules, programs, anticipations and so forth" (Derrida, 1992, p. 27) – such as the attacks of September 11, 2001 "always causes a wound in the daily course of history" (Derrida in Borradori, 2003, p. 94). However, the point here is not to question "who" and/or "what" it wounded, but to question its institutionalized "chronology." After all, "We are talking about a trauma, and thus an event, whose temporality proceeds neither from the now that is present nor from the present that is past but from an im-presentable to come (*à venir*) […] it comes from the to-come, from the future, a future so radically to come that it resists even the grammar of the future anterior" (Derrida in Borradori, 2003, p. 94).

This way, since here I question its institutionalized chronology, I assume that this *to come* (of "terrorism," fear, threat, danger), was already present in previous moments of U.S. foreign policy – it did not appear out of nowhere. In other words, the idea here is to work with ruptures –regarding commonly delimited contexts. For, otherwise this work would only sediment spatial-temporal boundaries and travel the same path dominant discourses do.

Institutional knowledge produced in the USA shows us that during the 20th century there were "signals" that "terrorism" would strike *in* that country and was thought in war-like terms. The *National commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*[138] published a 585-page report to "provide the most complete account […] of the events of September 11, what happened and why" (National

[137] According to Silviano Santiago (1979, p. 93, my translation), "It would still be necessary to consider that the idea of context, for Derrida, does not have the common sense of a 'set of presences that organize the moment of inscription,' a context described as 'real,' and in which the author's *vouloir-dire* is also placed. Within the scope of a semiological position, the context occurs as text: a text that is inscribed on the margin of another text, supplementing it." In the original: "Restaria ainda considerar que a ideia de contexto, para Derrida, não possui o sentido comum de 'conjunto de presenças que organizam o momento da inscrição', contexto este dito 'real' e no qual se coloca também o *vouloir-dire* do autor. No âmbito de uma posição semiológica, o contexto se dá como texto*: texto que se inscreve na margem* de um outro texto, suplementando-o."

[138] In its website, it is possible to know that "The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, an independent, bipartisan commission created by congressional legislation and the signature of President George W. Bush in late 2002, is chartered to prepare a full and complete account of the circumstances surrounding the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, including preparedness for and the immediate response to the attacks. The Commission is also mandated to provide recommendations designed to guard against future attacks." It is important to say that after the publication of its final report, the Commission ended its activities on August 21, 2004. To see more, access: <https://www.9-11commission.gov/> Accessed on 10 June, 2022.

Commission…., 2004, xvii). In this report, they included a chapter called *Foresight and Hindsight*. In this chapter, they point out that in the 1990s, while the USA celebrated the "end of the Cold War" and the end of the "Soviet military threat" (2004, p. 340), there were "fresh sources of instability and new challenges for the United States", for "America stood out as an object for admiration, envy, and blame." (2004, p. 340).

This report also shows that, long before 2001, the Reagan administration "formalized the practice of having presidential staff coordinate counterterrorism (p. 99)" to deal with Lebanon because of "Hezbollah's massacre of the Marines in Beirut" (p. 96). It also says that, after that, President George H. W. Bush's administration dealt with "new challenges," the first being "in 1990 and 1991 when he led an international coalition to reverse Iraq's invasion of Kuwait." (p. 340). Also, it highlights that the USA was assaulted during Clinton's administration, with the first World Trade Center Bombing (p. 71); with the assassination of two CIA employees in Virginia carried out by Mir Amal Kansi (p. 100); and with the allegedly Iraqi attempt of assassinating former President George H. W. Bush – all of them in 1993 (p. 98). These attacks provided what the report calls "counterterrorism" actions, such as the use of Tomahawk missiles in Iraq in 1993 (p. 98) and the authorization to double the number of border patrol agents along the Mexico border by 1999 (p. 81).

As Howard Zinn (2015, p. 15) puts it, "[…] the easy acceptance of atrocities as a deplorable but necessary price to pay for progress […] is still with us. One reason these atrocities are still with us is that we have learned to bury them in a mass of other facts, as radioactive wastes are buried in containers in the earth." It is important, then, to take a step back and to look, in more detail, to the *traces* of that "terrorism" to-come already *presented* in the 1980s and the 1990s, for not only were these traces ontologized as dangers, but also, they resulted in violence – attacks, wars, detentions, bans, assassinations – in the name of progress.

3.3.1
It is not "terrorism" if it contains the USSR

Ronald Reagan took office in 1981 and was reelected in 1984 for his second term. According to Zinn (2015), his Republican administration, typically described

as "conservative," worked in order to diminish the benefits provided for poor people while lowering taxes for the wealthy. In so doing, the Reagan years hit minorities, such as Black people, Latin-Americans, women and the young population, the hardest – they had almost no access to employment, medical insurance and the basics for subsistence and they were the first targets of draconian measures, such as those of Reagan's "War on Drugs"[139].

His administration also transformed the federal court system by filling it with conservative judges. It brought back the death penalty, decreased detainees' rights, and "prevented doctors in federally supported family planning clinics from giving women information on abortions, and said that poor people could be forced to pay for public education (education was not 'a fundamental right')" (Zinn, 2015, p. 573-574). Additionally, his administration also increased the military budget[140], actively worked against the USSR and revolutionary movements in the Caribbean – especially in Nicaragua and Grenada) – and also sent military forces to Lebanon, Syria, and Libya.

Not only did his administration start determined to combat "communism" (Office of the Historian, 2022), it also claimed to be focused on combatting "international terrorism" more efficiently than his predecessor, Jimmy Carter (1977-1981), for, one of his promises was that, unlike Carter, he was aware of the right answers and moves to deal with "terrorism" (Winkler, 2006; Starr-Deelen, 2014). Regarding the way Reagan addressed "terrorism," an interesting source lies in the book "*Promises Made, Promises Kept*" (1981-1989), authored by the Reagan administration itself (1988). This book, written at the end of the Reagan administration has the purpose of looking back and highlighting all of its achievements. The idea asserted is that Ronald Reagan, since the beginning of his first term, made a consistent "commitment to peace [and negotiation] through strength" (p. 42) in order to guide the U.S. national defense, to conduct its "foreign policy" and to redress any possible dangerous imbalance (p. 43). Also, according to this book, "international terrorism" presented a colossal challenge to Reagan's

[139] See more on the "War on Drugs" at Labate, B. C.; Cavnar C; and Rodrigues Thiago (Eds.) Drug Policies and the Politics of Drugs in the Americas. Switzerland: Springer, 2016.

[140] According to Thompson (2017, n.p.), "In 1980, the last year that Reagan's predecessor set spending priorities, the defense budget was $143 billion; by the time Reagan's second term began, it was headed over $300 billion." The idea was that "To make America strong, he restocked the nation's arsenal by rebuilding and modernizing its strategic and conventional forces" (The Reagan Administration, 1988, p. 43).

administration and, for this reason "the United States took decisive action against terrorists and their sponsors" (p. 47).

What was this "terrorism" challenge experienced by the USA in the 1980s? According to the Reagan administration (1988), "terrorism" could be observed in October 1985, when the Italian cruise ship *Achille Lauro* was captured by "terrorists" and a 69-year-old Jewish-American passenger (Leon Klinghoffer) was murdered. The book states that "terrorism" was countered, after these "terrorists'" surrendered to authorities, because President Reagan commanded the U.S. military forces to deliver them to Italian custody (p. 47). "Terrorism" was also recognized in April 1986, when the USA attacked facilities in Libya in order to stop "terrorist activities" (p. 47). In 1987, the USA also claimed to act against "terrorism" when it joined European allies and imposed economic and political sanctions against Syria – for the Syrian government was accused of taking part in the failed attempt to destroy Israeli airline "El Al" (p. 47). Additionally, the Reagan administration (1988) states that "one of the most tragic strikes against the United States was the bombing of the United States Marine Corps barracks during American participation in the multinational peacekeeping efforts of the United Nations in Lebanon." (p. 48) and that, because of these strikes against the USA, "[…] the national sense of mourning over this tragedy sharpened American resolve to eliminate the scourge of terrorism worldwide" (p. 48).

Evidently, these are only four out of countless examples. Starr-Deelen (2014) and Brulin (2018) bring many other episodes considered, by the Reagan administration, as "acts of terrorism," those being: the October 9, 1983 bombing of the Martyr's Mausoleum in Rangoon (Burma), that killed 21 people; the October 23, 1983 bombing attacks, attributed to Syria and Iran, against buildings housing US Marines and French paratroopers stationed in Beirut, that killed 241 Americans and 58 French soldiers; the Hijacking of TWA Flight 847, in 1985, where two Shia Lebanese hijacked a plane with 153 passengers (including 135 Americans) that was flying from Athens to Rome, which resulted in the death of Robert Stethem, a U.S. Navy diver; attacks at the Rome and Vienna airports, in 1985, attributed to Qaddafi's Libya, in which 18 passengers (including American tourists) were killed with hand grenades and guns; the bombing of the *La Belle* Disco in Berlin, in 1986, also attributed to Libya, in which a bomb exploded and killed three people, a Turkish woman and two U.S. soldiers, and injured more than 200 people, including

U.S. soldiers; the November 29, 1987 mid-air explosion of Korea Airlines Flight, attributed to a man and a woman arrested in Bahrain, that killed 115 people; and the Lockerbie Bomb, in 1988, attributed to Libyan nationals, in which the Pan Am flight 103 exploded and all the 259 people on board, as well as 11 people on the ground, died. According to Brulin (2018) these events were publicly described, by Reagan, as "vicious attacks;" and, this way, "state-sponsored terrorism" was to blame.

As it is possible to observe in the examples aforementioned, as well as in writings of analysts like Joyner (1988), Winkler (2006), Starr-Deelen (2014), Tsui (2015) and Brulin (2018), the Reagan administration prevailing perception conceived "terrorism" as something sponsored by foreign governments (i.e., "state-sponsored terrorism"). Because of this perception, and according to Starr-Deelen (2014, p. 50), "State sponsorship of terrorism dominated the foreign policy agenda of the administration [...]." And, even though it did not attempt to directly assert what "terrorists" would "really" be, "transnational terrorism became perceived as a weapon in the arsenal of United States' adversaries, especially within the context of the world-wide struggle between global Communism and the Western democracies." (Joyner, 1988, p. 31).

It is important to note that the idea of "state-sponsored terrorism" was influenced by the "Shultz doctrine" elaborated by George Shultz – the U.S. Secretary of State from 1982 to 1989. This doctrine advocated for the use of military force against "terrorists" and, more than that, against states that "support[ed], train[ed] or habor[ed] terrorists" (Starr-Deelen, 2014, p. 46). Starr-Deelen (2014, p. 48) also points out that William Casey – the director of the CIA from 1981 until 1987 – was another figure that helped in focusing the Reagan's administration attention against "terrorism" on the USSR and on those states he considered to follow a "Marxist-Leninist ideology." In this sense, as Winkler (2006, p. 80) puts it, Reagan's administration "reflected the scene, characters, and themes of the Cold War discourse" and, in so doing, "terrorism became less about individuals committing crimes and more about the Soviet Union and its client states permitting and encouraging terrorism as the means of furthering their ideological perspective" (Winkler, 2006, p. 51).

Therefore, "terrorism" was defined, by Reagan's administration, as violent acts committed against civilian and military targets and immorally carried out by

"enemies of the United States" and, consequentially, by the "totalitarian enemies" of the "Western, civilized world" (Brulin, 2018). "State-sponsored terrorism" was seen, then, as the antithesis of "democracy;" an antithesis *at war* with the USA (Tsui, 2015). Guided by this position, the administration claimed it would be "firm with terrorism" and would "not make concessions." It also claimed it would "apply pressure to states which sponsor terrorism," that it would "bring terrorists to justice," and that "terrorism" was a "crime, and terrorists must be treated as criminals" (Task Force Report, 1987, p. 2).

President Reagan even conceived the idea of the existence of a "confederation of terrorist states," sponsored and controlled by Moscow (Brulin, 2018), which comprised Cuba, Iran, Libya, North Korea, and Nicaragua. According to him, these countries,

> continents away, tens of thousands of miles apart, [had] the same goals and objectives. I submit to you that the growth in terrorism in recent years results from the increasing involvement of these states in terrorism in every region of the world. This is terrorism that is part of a pattern, the work of a confederation of terrorist states. Most of the terrorists who are kidnaping and murdering American citizens and attacking American installations are being trained, financed, and directly or indirectly controlled by a core group of radical and totalitarian governments -- a new, international version of Murder, Incorporated. And all of these states are united by one simple criminal phenomenon -- their fanatical hatred of the United States, our people, our way of life, our international stature […] Yes, their real goal is to expel America from the world. And that is the reason these terrorist nations are arming, training, and supporting attacks against this nation. And that is why we can be clear on one point: these terrorist states are now engaged in acts of war against the Government and people of the United States (Reagan, 1985b, n.p.).

In this sense, we can observe a strong position regarding the USSR, delineated with the help of a dichotomic "East-West" world (asymmetrical) divide, for the USSR was considered an "evil empire," an "evildoer" that could control countries and that threatened the "free world" in trying to "expel America from the world" (Reagan, 1985b, n.p.). There was, then, an idea of an entanglement between this "confederation of terrorist states" with "communism" and the USSR. The Reagan administration considered them to be a threat to U.S. national security that acted in order to overthrow American values and interests (Joyner, 1988, p. 31).

Because of this scenario, Ronald Reagan is considered the first American president to address countering "international terrorism" as something not only

important, but central in the U.S. foreign policy (Brulin, 2018). By focusing in the so-called "state-sponsored terrorism," the Reagan administration also employed what Tsui (2015) calls a "war metaphor"[141] in order to carry out its "terrorism" discourses. And, in so doing, he could link the "Cold War" narrative to the existence of "state-sponsored terrorism."

According to Reagan (1985a, n.p.)

> the war which terrorists are waging is not only directed against the United States, it is a war against all of civilized society. This is a war in which innocent civilians are targets. This is a war in which innocent civilians are intentional victims, and our servicemen have become specific targets. This cannot continue. We must act against those who have so little regard for human life and the values we cherish. And we must do so in concert with other nations who share our democratic institutions and basic disdain for violence and the use of force. We of the Western World must act together.

Interestingly, this enraged and close attention to the violence of "terrorism" perpetrated by "enemies" of the United States and the "civilized world" did not seem to comprise the violent, condemnable actions conducted by countries that were friendly and allied to the United States. According to the Reagan administration (1988), "President Reagan consistently supported and encouraged the turn to democracy throughout the world. A notable exception to the spread of freedom was Nicaragua under its Marxist Sandinista government, a primary source of instability in Central America" (p. 49) and that happened because that administration sought, for example, "[…] an end to Sandinista support for regional insurgency; an end to Nicaraguan military ties to Cuba and the Soviet bloc (p. 49-50)."

In this sense, the Reagan administration did not appear to be outraged by the military juntas governing Nicaragua, Chile, El Salvador, and Guatemala, to the lack of "democracy," and to strong civil repression in those countries (Zinn, 2015). On the contrary, (military and violent) retaliation was only directed to "hostile" nations (i.e., nations that were not allied and aligned to the USA in its fight against

[141] Also, if we think about the discourses of George W. Bush administration (2001-2009), it is possible to observe the dissemination of some elements of Reagan's "terrorism" discourse. There are similarities not only on the way they approached "terrorism," but also in style and language. The idea of a "War on Terror" in 2001 was contaminated by Reagan explicit definition of "terrorism" as an "act of war" that, according to his discourse on "terrorism," should be militarily countered by the USA.

"communism") (Zinn, 2015; Brulin, 2018). Another irony lies in the fact that, in sorting out those who would be labeled "terrorist," the Reagan administration also made sure that the U.S. covert actions were not designed as "actions of terrorism."

And why is that? The administration's emphasis on "state-sponsored terrorism" faced continuous inconveniences. Not only did the Reagan administration support El Salvador – a country involved in the murder of four American nuns and the cover-up of their deaths in 1980 –, it also supported the Nicaraguan *Contras,* who worked in order to overthrow the Nicaraguan government in power at that time by perpetrating what could be considered "terrorism"[142]. According to Winkler (2006, p. 73), because of these links with El Salvador and the Nicaraguan *Contras,* sixty-six percent of the American public considered that the USA was a state that sponsored "terrorism." As the author shows, this percentage came from the positive response to the statement "*There is little point to our condemning a state of terrorism against American interests in the Middle East if we support our own terrorists in Central America*" (p. 73).

The accusations regarding the USA ties to the *Contras* could also be observed in the "Iran-Contra Affair." It does deserve our attention because it was a large political scandal during the Reagan years and because it involved attempts to cover-up the sale of weapons to Iran in exchange of the release of American hostages held in Lebanon, as well as the transfer of funds to the *Contras* in Nicaragua (Starr-Deelen, 2014). In so doing, not only did Reagan's administration provide financial means to the *Contras*, a group that could be labeled as "terrorist" according to Reagan's own definitions of what "terrorism" was, but it also negotiated with countries they considered and listed as "terrorists," i.e., Lebanon and Iran.

Through complex arrangements, involving Israel, Iran, Lebanon and Nicaragua, the USA carried out a covert operation, and acted against its own promise of not "negotiating with terrorists." These arrangements became public when the Lebanese magazine *Ash-Sheraa* exposed them (Sutton, 2012; Ward, 1987). President Ronald Reagan, however, claimed his government only sold weapons to Iran, but not in exchange for hostages, for, admitting the contrary would

[142] According to an article published by the *New York Times* in 1985, the *Contras*, in working to overthrow the Nicaraguan Government, engaged in attacks against civilian targets which included assassinations, rape, kidnapping, torture and mutilation (Rohtes, 1985, p. 1). A *Human Rights Watch* report (n.d.) also shows that the *Contras* promoted selective murders of non-combatants and mistreated prisoners.

mean his administration had cooperated with, and capitulated to "terrorists" (Starr-Deelen, 2014).

Also, according to Brulin (2018), since 1972, the U.S. contradictory actions have been the target of heated discussions at the United Nations General Assembly, especially when there were attempts to deal with the question of "international terrorism." No agreement could be reached on a clear definition of what "terrorism" is/was, for many countries sought to differentiate "terrorism" and "armed resistance" – in which resistance is understood as a way of avoiding/fighting foreign occupation that could never be compared to acts of "terrorism."

According to this view, countries' representatives argued that the U.S. practices in the Vietnam, during the previous decades, could also be considered "state-sponsored terrorism." Because of that, Brulin (2018) considers that the General Assembly was an adversarial forum to the Reagan administration, for the USA, during the 1980s, not only did support military juntas and various questionable regimes around the world, but also sponsored non-state actors that worked in order to overthrow pro-Soviet regimes, like the *Contras* in Nicaragua, the *Mujahideens*, in Afghanistan and *anti-Castro exiles*, from Cuba (Brulin, 2018, n.p.).

The Reagan administration also used direct military force against Libya, Syria, and Lebanon. All these actions, together, were considered, by members of the General Assembly, as acts of "state-sponsored terrorism." The Reagan administration, however, did not think so. In interfering in other countries affairs, it seemed to understand that the USA was only devoted to its "commitment to assist those fighting for freedom and independence in their homelands" and nothing else (The Reagan Administration, 1988, p. 49).

On a defensive position, and in order to deal with these drawbacks, the Reagan administration tried to justify its actions against "state-sponsored terrorism" by establishing the difference between "terrorism" and "insurgency." In so doing, it defended the idea that "[I]t is important to differentiate between terrorism's rampant indiscriminate brutality against innocent third parties and the organized armed opposition to communist tyranny that is taking place […]" (Kimmitt, 1984 apud Winkler 2006, p. 74). In this sense, while "terrorism" was defined as a set of "bad, barbaric, and condemnable" actions, insurgency was considered a "revolutionary" political role played by "third world groups" – like the Contras –

whose acts could be compared to those guided by the ideals of the American Revolution (Winkler, 2006). Certainly, this could be considered a risky and ambiguous strategy in order to keep the USA, as well as the administration, far away from "terrorism."

Because of that, and in continuously trying to defend itself against these accusations, Reagan's administration also worked in trying to merge "terrorism" and "drug trafficking" as dangers that walked hand in hand, that is, the "twin menaces" that endangered the USA. In reinforcing this discourse, and as Winkler (2006, p. 75) shows, in 1984 the U.S. Ambassador Lewis Tambs described the *FARC* activities in Colombia as an act of "narco-terrorism." The same was applied during the 1980s to the *Sendero Luminoso* activities in Peru. In this context, the Reagan administration launched a "War on Drugs." According to The Reagan Administration (1988, p. 22), "[…] President Reagan pursued the goal of eliminating illegal drug use. He developed a comprehensive national strategy for attacking the demand and supply side of the problem of illegal drugs and launched the National Crusade for a Drug-Free America."

According to the *National Security Decision, Directive Number 221* (NSDD 221, 1986), titled *Narcotics and National Security*, drugs were a problem that encompassed not only public health but law enforcement and, because of that, they menaced the USA not only *inside*, but *outside* of its borders (p. 1). This "threat" was localized especially in Latin America and under its umbrella there were

> criminal trafficking organizations, rural insurgents, and urban terrorists [that could] undermine the stability of the local government; corrupt efforts to curb drug crop production, processing, and distribution; and distort-public perception of the narcotics issue in such a way that it becomes part of an anti-U,S. or anti-Western debate (NSDD 221, 1986, p. 1).

More than that, the document stated that this "new threat" menaced the integrity of "democratic governments by corrupting political and judicial institutions." (p. 2). Because of this scenario, according to Rodrigues and Labate (2016, p. 24), Reagan ordered that the Defense and the State Departments should act in supporting Latin American countries against "narcoguerrillas." That would be done through financial and technical support, as well as through the training of military forces of Latin America. For, as the NSDD 221 (1986, p. 2) put it, "it is

therefore the policy of the United States, in cooperation with other nations, to halt the production and flow of illicit narcotics, reduce the ability of insurgent and terrorist groups to use drug trafficking to support their activities, and strengthen the ability of individual governments to confront and defeat this threat."

The "War on Drugs" had many fronts, encompassing military intervention in other countries – commonly referred to as financial and military *cooperation* –, as well as campaigns in order to try to reduce drug trade and consumption in the USA. In one of these fronts, campaigns were led together with the first-lady, Nancy Reagan, under the slogan "Just say no!" It suggested that, to solve the difficult problem of drug addiction, as well as the "twin menace" of "narco-terrorism," Americans should just say "no" to drugs.

In this sense, "[t]errorists, now associating with the drug traffickers, were not misunderstood freedom fighters; they were dangerous enemies who plagued American society. The strategy encompassed hope of renewed innocence for the United States and reinforced guilt for those who attacked American values and principles." (Winkler, 2006, p. 75). Curiously, while insisting that Americans should "Just say no!" and while promoting military interventions in Latin America, by the same time, the USA was being accused of supporting "narco-terrorism," because the Nicaraguan *Contras*, sponsored by the USA, were linked with drug-trafficking.

Brulin (2018) shows us another interesting example: as I already pointed out before, Reagan publicly denounced "state-sponsored terrorism" as a vicious and morally condemnable act (1985a, 1985b). However, when the Ragoon bombings of 1983[143] were discussed in the UNGA, U.S. representatives argued that debating the bombings in terms of "international terrorism" was not appropriated. Instead of talking about "state-sponsored terrorism," the U.S. representative at the UN, Robert Rosenstock, chose to talk about "terrorism" as an action conducted by individuals or groups. And why was that? According to Brulin (2018, n.p.), "in a context where other member states insisted that American support for groups like the *Contras*, the *Mujahedeen* or UNITA was a form of 'state terrorism,' US representatives

[143] For a more detailed description of this event, see: Chapman, William. 1983. North Korean Leader's Son Blamed for Rangoon Bombing. The Washington Post. Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1983/12/03/north-korean-leaders-son-blamed-for-rangoon-bombing/ddec34cc-9c12-4fc6-bf75-36057091aa4e/>.

repeatedly argued that acts committed by individuals or groups with support by a state were, themselves, state acts, and should therefore not be considered as acts of 'terrorism' either."

In this sense by not being explicit when defining what it meant by "terrorism," and, more than that, by expressing adversarial conceptions on "terrorism" – the "state-sponsored terrorism," and the "narco-terrorism" on the one hand, in public speeches; and the "terrorism" that could only be committed by individuals or groups – i.e., "transnational terrorism" (Bonditti, 2014) –, but not by states, on the other hand, at places like the UN –, the Reagan administration was able to make accusations against a "confederation of terrorist states," "narcoterrorists," while remaining silent about the continuous condemnable actions carried out by the USA and by its allies.

This way, during the 1980s, under the umbrella of "terrorism" and following the idea it was threat that should be delegitimated and eliminated, we can observe the dissemination of an ambiguous strategy that sometimes relied on the idea of "state-sponsored terrorism," that at other times, turned to the idea of a "terrorism/insurgency" divide, and, also, relied on the justification that the USA could act against "terrorism" because it was a danger that walked hand in hand with narcotic drug trafficking, composing the "twin menaces" that put the country and its population in danger. "Terrorism," once again, eluded a clear-cut definition, as well as U.S. security – it remained a "problem" against which the USA would wage wars against, a problem that haunted the two terms of Reagan's administration.

3.3.2
A "New World Order" with the same old problems

Contrary to his predecessor's and to his successor's, the George H. W. Bush administration only had one term, from 1989 to 1993. Bush was Ronald Reagan's vice-president and, for that reason, authors like Howard Zinn (2015) talk about twelve Reagan-Bush years because of their conservative Republican backgrounds. However, it does not mean that their administrations followed the exact same path. Unlike his predecessor, Bush was a combat veteran, for he was a naval aviator during World War II (1939-1945). Bush had also served as the director of the CIA (1976-1977), the US Ambassador to the UN (1971-1973), as well as the chair of

the “Task Force on Combatting Terrorism” established in 1985, all of which gave him a unique training regarding “foreign policy” and the issue of “terrorism.” Also, according to Starr-Deelen (2014), Bush’s “foreign policy” could be described as one that pursued a more “pragmatic” and “prudent” approach, in opposition to Ronald Reagan’s, which is considered by the author as a more “ideological foreign policy” because of its strong worldview towards “communism” and the USSR.

His four years in office were characterized by economic deceleration, high unemployment rates and social crisis (Pecequilo, 2007). Regarding its foreign incursions, Zinn (2015, p. 593) shows that both Reagan and Bush aspired to overcome the “American public’s abhorrence […] of foreign military interventions,” especially observed through what Bush called the “Vietnam syndrome” (Bush, 1991c; Arraes, 2004). Accordingly, literature on the USA conventionally points out that Bush entered office during a period of change, that is, “the end of the Cold War” (Haas, 2010).

In that context, there was the idea that together with the Cold War’s end, it was also possible to observe the “Soviet enemy” demise. A “New World Era,” the “End of History” (Fukuyama, 1992) and a period of hope seemed to take place – at least according to conventional literature. Nevertheless, it did not mean that the USA had no tensions left. On the contrary, besides “the end of the Cold War,” the world witnessed the violent “dissolution” of Yugoslavia, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the “dissolution” of the USSR and an Afghanistan abandoned by the Soviet Army. Also, Iran, Lebanon, and Palestine represented some of the tensions that would have the attention of the Bush administration.

In other words, if during the Cold War the containment of “communism” was understood as essential to guarantee that the USA would be “safe” from “external threats,” after the disintegration of the USSR, the Bush administration did not recognize the world as a “safe” place. On the contrary, it worked in order to maintain the “civilized world” “safe” and “free” at all costs (Bandeira, 2009). In so doing, even after the Cold War came to an end, military spending was not significantly reduced, for “new threats” were identified. Such “threats” did not have the Soviet territorial and sovereign character, they were immeasurable, faceless, de-territorialized, but they were considered by the US government as dangerous as “communism.” In a world no longer divided by the “Cold War lines,” the “green peril” and “Islamic fundamentalism,” replaced the red evil, “communism;” and

international drug trafficking and environmental disasters were also considered urgent matters (Hadar, 1993; Bandeira, 2009). These actors, according to Nye (2009), would represent the "new transnational security challenges."

On September 19, 1989, a French airplane exploded over the Sahara Desert. Because of the explosion, the 170 passengers of the UTA Flight 772 died, including seven Americans. Only in 1999 six Libyans were tried (*in absentia*) and convicted of the bombing (Starr-Deelen, 2014). However, this incident brought by the author as an act of "terrorism" is conventionally known as the "forgotten flight," for little has been written about it, and also because actions against it were only taken during the Clinton and the Bush II years.

On August 2, 1990, during Bush's second year in office, Iraq "invaded" Kuwait (Campbell, 1993). According to Zinn (2015, p. 593), this was an opportunity for Bush to overcome the aforementioned "American public's abhorrence […] of foreign military interventions." Iraq, under the government of Saddam Hussein, had taken over a small neighbor, Kuwait. And, according to Bandeira (2009) and Zinn (2015), the Bush administration looked at the imbroglio between these two far-away countries as a means to boost his popularity and to, maybe, guarantee his re-election.

Not long after, on September 11, 1990, Bush stated that

> We stand today at a unique and extraordinary moment. The crisis in the Persian Gulf, as grave as it is, also offers a rare opportunity to move toward an historic period of cooperation. Out of these troubled times, our fifth objective — a new world order — can emerge: a new era — freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace. An era in which the nations of the world, East and West, North and South, can prosper and live in harmony. […] Today that new world is struggling to be born, a world quite different from the one we've known. A world where the rule of law supplants the rule of the jungle. A world in which nations recognize the shared responsibility for freedom and justice. A world where the strong respect the rights of the weak. […] America and the world must defend common vital interests — and we will. America and the world must support the rule of law — and we will. America and the world must stand up to aggression — and we will. And one thing more: In the pursuit of these goals, America will not be intimidated (Bush, 1990, n.p.).

As shown by Arraes (2004), following the Kuwait "invasion," the United States assembled the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in 1990, and, in the meantime, applied sanctions on Iraq. After that, the UNSC resolution 678, of

November 29, 1990, authorized the armed intervention of the USA and the creation of a coalition in order to "restore Kuwait's sovereignty" (Patriota, 2010). On January 16, 1991, George Bush delivered a speech in which he stated that,

> Some may ask: Why act now? Why not wait? The answer is clear: The world could wait no longer. […] Saddam was warned over and over again to comply with the will of the United Nations: Leave Kuwait, or be driven out. Saddam has arrogantly rejected all warnings. Instead, he tried to make this a dispute between Iraq and the United States of America.[…] Well, he failed. Tonight, 28 nations -- countries from 5 continents, Europe and Asia, Africa, and the Arab League -- have forces in the Gulf area standing shoulder to shoulder against Saddam Hussein. These countries had hoped the use of force could be avoided. Regrettably, we now believe that only force will make him leave (Bush, 1991a, n.p.).

The justification for war also relied on accusations that Iraq was developing a nuclear bomb. But there was little evidence to sustain this argument (Arraes, 2004; Zinn, 2015). Also, we should also keep in mind that the USA had (and has) nuclear bombs itself. On January 17, 1991, Saddam Hussein ignored an *ultimatum* to leave Kuwait's territory and the USA, and its coalition launched air strikes against Kuwait. The operation that took place received the name "Desert Storm" and strikes against Iraq lasted until February, 28, 1991 (Zinn, 2015, p. 597).

Nevertheless, even if the strikes only lasted less than two months, the human consequences of this war were shockingly clear during the 1990s and remain to this day. According to Al Samaraie (2007, p. 4), "the Iraqi army's crushing defeat by the US-led international forces in a 43-day military campaign was a tremendous blow to the already exhausted nation." Consequently,

> Destroyed power plants, oil refineries, communication and transport networks and sewage treatment plants disrupted the people's normal living conditions. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children and members of other age groups died due to malnutrition and a lack of health services or elementary medical facilities. Hospitals were understaffed and under-equipped; the efforts of doctors and nurses were hampered by the lack of equipment such as X-ray, and lung and heart machines. Drugs thought potentially liable to dual use or deliberate misuse were delivered with delays and were often unavailable. In order to meet their basic needs and continue a life in dignity, many people had to sell their belongings and personal heritage (Al Samaraie, 2007, p. 4-5).

In this sense, Iraq found itself tied to all sorts of sanctions: it was accused of possessing WMD and, therefore, Saddam's regime would have to get rid of them; Iraq also had to negotiate the sale of oil in exchange for subsistence products, in an "oil for food" strategy (Al Samaraie, 2007). Only in 1995 was the country authorized to exchange oil for medicine as well. In addition, Iraq was prohibited from importing chemical products (power generators, water cleaning products, ambulances and even pencils, as it was believed that they could potentially be used for military purposes). In the end of " Operation Desert Storm," Saddam's regime was not overthrown, but we could observe a country severely affected by sanctions and embargoes (Arraes, 2004).

What about "terrorism?" Starr-Deelen (2014, p. 73) shows that when George H. W. Bush took office, his administration opted for a more "low-key" approach because the "Reagan administration's war against terrorism was not viewed as a resounding success." Also, Tsui (2014) demonstrates that there are not many analyses which look in detail to the George H. W. Bush administration discourse on "terrorism." This is due, firstly, to his short time in office and, secondly, because his attention was mainly focused on framing a "new world order" and addressing some imbroglios as "threats" and, not directly, as "terrorism." However, it does not mean that Bush's administration did not contribute to the discursive re-construction of "terrorism." In dealing with "new threats," "Weapons of Mass Destruction" and "rogue states," it relied on the same terms, spatializations and temporalizations used to asymmetrically identify "terrorist" actions and enemies. Also, as we can observe in section 3.4, Bush's National Security Strategies invoke the "threat" of terrorism numerous times. In this sense, according to Winkler (2006), Lazar and Lazar (2007, p. 46) and Bonditti (2014), in the "post-Cold War era," "terrorism" has been identified in the "new enemy" and in the "new threat" – especially in Saddam Hussein, Iraq, and the so called "rogue states."

Winkler (2006) demonstrates that the Bush administration, at least initially, struggled with the possibility of addressing Iraq's invasion of Kuwait as an "act of terrorism." That happened because, at that time, the Bush administration considered that Iraq could be a potential ally in the Middle East (Winkler, 2006), as it was during the 1980s in the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988). In this sense, it is possible to observe that, at the beginning of the "Gulf War," Bush's speeches referred to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait as acts of "aggression," as an "invasion," as an "occupation,"

etc. (Bush, 1990). A speech delivered by Bush on August 9, 1990 is itself called "Address on Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait." The words "terrorism," "terrorist" and "terror" did not appear. "Iraqi threats," "an aggressive authoritarian dictator threatening his neighbors;" and the need to "to stand up for what's right and condemn what's wrong" were mentioned, though.

However, on January 5, 1991, not long before the beginning of "Desert Storm," on a *Radio Address to the Nation on the Persian Gulf Crisis*, Bush stated that

> Each day that passes brings Saddam Hussein further on the path to developing biological and nuclear weapons and the missiles to deliver them. If Saddam corners the world energy market, he can then finance further aggression, terror, and blackmail. Each day that passes increases Saddam's worldwide threat to democracy […] And each day that passes is another day of fear, suffering, and terror for the people of Kuwait' (Bush, 1991b, p. 11).

Also, in January, 1991, on a *Message to Allied Nations on the Persian Gulf Crisis*, Bush said that "[i]n more than 5 months since August 2nd, Iraqi troops have conducted a systematic campaign of terror on the people of Kuwait – unspeakable atrocities against men and women and, among the maimed and murdered, even innocent children" (Bush, 1991b, p. 12). In this sense, and according to Winkler (2006, p. 99), labeling Saddam's Hussein regime as a "terrorist" one meant that somewhere along the way Bush's administration started to consider the conflict between Iraq and Kuwait one of high stakes. Also, we can understand that, in framing Saddam Hussein's regime as a "terrorist" one, the Bush administration leaned on Reagan's conception of states as providers of support for "terrorism" – i.e., "state-sponsored terrorism." Nevertheless, the Bush administration discourse not only addressed a foreign country and connected it somehow to "terrorist acts," but it also included a leader (i.e., Saddam Hussein) who committed or that could commit condemnable, authoritarian acts of aggression.

In this sense, it is possible to observe that, even if the words "terrorism," "terrorist" or "terror" did not appear as central to the Bush administration as it was during the Reagan years, "it" still showed up and, as in the previous years, it did not have a clear definition – it eluded definition, but it was, somehow, disseminated, and contaminated. It justified the interference of the USA and of its allies in the

affairs of two far-away countries that, if on the one hand, restored Kuwait's sovereignty, on the other, left the Iraqi population under excruciating difficulties.

Also, we should not forget that even if the name "terrorism" is not presented frequently, we could still observe an asymmetrical structure of discrimination against an-*other* (Yamato, 2021), for "new threats," "the green peril," "rogue states," "Weapons of Mass Destruction," and "outlaw regimes" were constantly addressed, and implied the existence of "lawful regimes," and "a peaceful world". Following the idea of an asymmetrical counterconceptual iterable structure, we may not have observed "terrorism" continuously, but we could still see its traces haunting George H. W. Bush's foreign policy security practices and discourses.

Once again, we can notice that mobilizing "terrorism" or any other asymmetrical counterconceptual framing leads to contradictions and works in order to justify violence. If, on the one hand, a "new world order free from the threat of terror" was announced, on the other hand, "new threats," "Weapons of Mass Destruction," and "rogue states" seemed to "terrorize" the Bush administration. Also, we could wonder how a "new world order" could be free from the threat of "terror" when air strikes, famine, and diseases devastated Iraq and its population.

3.3.3

Once again: "New terrorism"

William (Bill) Clinton eight-year administration began with expectations for change, especially because it would take place after twelve years of successive conservative Republican presidents. In this sense, a Democrat represented "[…] a hope that a bright, young person would bring to the country what he promised" (Zinn, 2015, p. 643). However, even if some changes, for the better, seemed to take place, for more people of color occupied governmental positions, were they to become "too bold," Clinton would replace them rapidly (p. 644)[144]. Also, his

[144] According to Howard Zinn (2015, p. 644-645), Clinton "made a few Cabinet appointments that suggested support for labor and for social welfare programs, and appointed a black pro-labor man [Professor William B. Gould IV] as head of the National Labor Relations Board. But his key appointments to the Treasury and Commerce Departments were wealthy corporate lawyers, and his foreign policy staff – the Secretary of Defense, the Director of the CIA, the National Security Adviser – were traditional players on the bipartisan cold war team […] Lani Guiniar, a black legal scholar who was being considered for a job in the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department, was abandoned when conservatives objected to her strong ideas on matters of racial equality and voter representation."

administration was characterized by its strong "Law and Order approach," observed in the implementation of racist and punitive policies guided by the *Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996* and the *Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act of 1996* which strongly disappointed his electorate, for, as Whidden (2001, p. 2826) highlights, these measures worked as draconian immigration laws that violated rights such as due process, free speech and fair trial[145].

While the Clinton administration downsized its military personnel by 15 percent and its expenses (O'Hanlon, 2003), it continued to have a considerable budget – of $ 250 billion a year – to maintain its military machine working. Also, because of accusations that he would have avoided military service during the Vietnam war – for, at that time, his political views opposed war –, once he became President, he seemed to work in order to bury this image and took every opportunity he had to show he supported the U.S. military establishment (Zinn, 2015, p. 652).

This way, during his eight years in office, he provided military aid to South Korea, supplied arms to Saudi Arabia and Taiwan, promoted "humanitarian" interventions in Somalia and Rwanda, and so on. His administration also bombed Iraq and promoted embargoes – that did not allow shipments of food or medicine – to Cuba and Iraq (Barilleaux and Kim, 1999; Dumbrell, 2009; Zinn, 2015).

Zinn (2015) calls our attention to the "hobgoblins"[146] that alarmed the Clinton administration: immigrants, people on welfare, and states like Cuba, Iraq, and North Korea. According to the author, by drawing attention to them, and by exaggerating their supposed dangers, the Clinton administration was able to conceal the failures of its government. Among these "hobgoblins" were also "terrorists." However, dealing with "terrorism" was not the initial and central preoccupation of the Clinton administration. On the contrary, "terrorism" came to be considered as a pressing challenge to U.S. national security because of events such as the 1993 World Trade Center Bombing, the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, the 1995 Tokyo sarin gas

[145] According to the Center for Death Penalty Litigation Staff (CDPL, 2023) the AEDPA of 1996 "[…] not only stripped federal courts of their power to correct unconstitutional state criminal convictions at the dawn of the era of mass incarceration, but another provision of AEDPA played to rising anti-immigrant sentiment, making it harder for people to claim asylum and thereby increasing deportations and family separations." (n.p.). This way, black people (CDPL, 2023) as well as Arabs and/or Muslims (Whidden, 2001) were hurt the most.

[146] According to Zinn (2015, p. 647) 'H. L. Mencken, the acerbic social critic of the 1920s, put it: "The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary."

attack, the 1996 Khobar Towers Bombing, the 1998 US Embassy Bombings in Africa, and the 2000 USS Cole Bombing (Badey, 2007; Tsui, 2015). After those events, "terrorism" would be seen as a serious and central "threat" to be countered by the U.S. military.

His foreign policy agenda seemed to focus on the promotion of "democracy," instead of the previous "containment" strategy promoted during the Cold War. Also, differently from the Reagan administration, Clinton's administration rhetoric regarding "terrorism" did not link it to warfare, neither did it "label terrorist incidents as 'acts of war' to mobilize public support for his counterterrorism efforts" (Starr- Deelen, 2014, p. 86). On the contrary, the U.S. continuous conflict with "terrorism" was portrayed as a battle of good *versus* evil (Winkler, 2006, p. 145).

Also, especially after 1993, we can observe that the Clinton administration turned its attention to *al-Qaeda*, for it considered that organization, as well as its leader, Osama bin Laden, responsible for the World Trade Center bombing of 1993. The war against "international terrorism" became, then, a key element of Clinton's foreign policy. An example of this centrality could be found in the fact that Clinton addressed "international terrorism" in all of his State of the Union Addresses (Dumbrell, 2007)

In his *State of the Union Address*, delivered in 1994, Clinton recognized that there were "dangers in the world: rampant arms proliferation, bitter regional conflicts, ethnic and nationalist tensions in many new democracies, severe environmental degradation the world over, and fanatics who seek to cripple the world's cities with terror." (p. 54). Then, in the next year, he highlighted that "[a]s the cowards who bombed the World Trade Center found out, this country will hunt down terrorists and bring them to justice […]" (Clinton, 1995, p. 84). Still in this speech, Clinton asserted that "the terrorists represent the past, not the future." (p. 84) and that, in order to assure that, he called "all our allies and peace-loving nations throughout the world to join us with renewed fervor in a global effort to combat terrorism. We cannot permit the future to be marred by terror and fear and paralysis" (Clinton, 1995, p. 84).

In 1996, we can observe that, according to Clinton, "terrorism" acquired a boundlessness feature, for he said that "the threat we face today as American respect

no nation's borders" (p. 84). In the following year, in the *State of the Union Address* of 1997, Clinton said that

> We are working with other nations with renewed intensity to fight drug traffickers and to stop terrorists before they act and hold them fully accountable if they do. Now we must rise to a new test of leadership, ratifying the Chemical Weapons Convention. Make no mistake about it. It will make our troops safer from chemical attack. It will help us to fight terrorism. We have no more important obligations […] In the end, more than anything else, our world leadership grows out of the power of our example here at home, out of our ability to remain strong as one America. All over the world, people are being torn asunder by racial, ethnic, and religious conflicts that fuel fanaticism and terror. We are the world's most diverse democracy, and the world looks to us to show that it is possible to live and advance together across those kinds of differences (Clinton, 1997, p. 115-116).

In the *State of the Union Address of 1998*, Clinton said that "[w]e must combat an unholy axis of new threats from terrorists" (p. 27) and that "[t]hese 21st century predators feed on technology and the free flow of information and ideas and people. And they will be all the more lethal if weapons of mass destruction fall into their hands." (p. 27) Finally, in 1999, Clinton delivered his last *State of the Union Address*. In evaluating his years in office, he stated that

> As we work for peace, we must also meet threats to our nation's security -- including increased dangers from outlaw nations and terrorism. We will defend our security wherever we are threatened, as we did this summer when we struck at Osama bin Laden's network of terror. The bombing of our embassies in Kenya and Tanzania reminds us again of the risks faced every day by those who represent America to the world. So, let's give them the support they need, the safest possible workplaces, and the resources they must have so America can continue to lead […] We must work to keep terrorists from disrupting computer networks. We must work to prepare local communities for biological and chemical emergencies, to support research into vaccines and treatments. […]So, I say to all of you, if we do these things -- if we pursue peace, fight terrorism, increase our strength, renew our alliances -- we will begin to meet our generation's historic responsibility to build a stronger 21st century America in a freer, more peaceful world (Clinton, 1999, n.p.).

As we can observe in the aforementioned excerpts, the Clinton administration discourse on "terrorism" relied upon the idea of novelty, that is, of a "new terrorism" (Tsui, 2015). By stressing the threats to U.S. security as "crippling terror," "boundless terrorism," an "axis of new terrorist threats," "cyberterrorism"

and so on, the Clinton administration called out attention to the idea that this "new terrorism" could come both from "within" or "outside," that it could paralyze cities and populations by hurting and terrorizing them, and that it could harm countries through computer networks.

In other words, if one day there was a clear boundary between "internal" and "external" "terrorism," that was not the case anymore. Clinton's discourse on "terrorism" also lean on what Tsui (2015) calls "medical metaphors," for his administration called attention to the possibilities of "terrorism," "Weapons of Mass Destruction" and many other threats could spread uncontrollably (like a cancer) and that, if the USA did not fight it ruthlessly, there would be no cure for it.

As we can also observe, the Clinton administration worked in order to counter "terrorism." As I already mentioned, in 1993 a frustrated Iraqi assassination attempt against former President George H. W. Bush took place. In retaliation, Clinton, who had been in office for less than six months, authorized the U.S. Air Force to bomb Baghdad. However, instead of hitting the "Intelligence Headquarters" it supposedly aimed at, the bombs stroke a suburban neighborhood in Baghdad and killed at least six people – who had nothing to do with the alleged assassination attempt against Bush. Even if this unsuccessful and violent outcome, this kind of response can be envisaged as an example of Clinton's credentials on the "fight against international terrorism" (Badey, 2007; Zinn, 2015).

Also, in May 1995, Clinton passed the *Anti-terrorism Amendment Act*. This legislation advocated for an increase in the law enforcement agencies powers in order to deal with "terrorism," and, in order to guarantee so, Clinton reinforced that "it provides valuable tools for stopping and punishing terrorists. It stands as a tribute to the victims of terrorism and to the men and women in law enforcement who dedicate their lives to protecting all of us from the scourge of terrorist activity." (1996, n.p.).

In 1998, the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were bombed. According to Clinton, these acts "remind us again of the risks faced every day by those who represent America to the world." (Clinton, 1999, n.p.). In response to these attacks, the Clinton administration bombed targets in Afghanistan and Sudan under the justification that Afghanistan would be the base for "activity" of *al-Qaeda* and that Sudan would have provided means to manufacturing chemical weapons. However, neither there were proofs that Afghanistan had links to those attacks, nor had the

bombed factory of Sudan been involved in the manufacturing of chemical weapons; rather, it turned out to be a place that produced medicines for half of that country population. Unquestionably, the human consequences of this kind of loss cannot be easily calculated (Zinn, 2015, p. 659).

In applying a language that also built upon Reagan's framing of "terrorism," the Clinton administration described "terrorism" as a threat to the very fabric of the U.S. existence (Badey, 2007). Once again, the specter of "communism" seemed to leave the room, and it was replaced, once again, by the contaminated and disseminated specter of "terrorism." Once again, a "new crusade" against evil would take place. Once again… until the next time, for the concept of "new terrorism" would also haunt the George W. Bush administration and its "War on Terror" discourse.

As I showed in Chapter 2, "language eludes clarity and precision" (Strathern, 2002, n. p.). That is, through iterability, a "sign" could always be/invoke another thing in its sameness – i.e., it can be repeated while being transformed. Therefore, iterability implies the possibility of a "repetition" that disrupts a given context – it breaks with context – for contexts are always open and not susceptible to saturation (Derrida, 1988).In this sense, the language of "Wars on *Terrors*" before September 11, 2001 also elude clarity, precision, and a point of departure.

And what is at stake here? Why is that a problem? It is a problem because "smart bombs," "surgical attacks," "embargoes," "sanctions," and "strong military responses" against "terrorism" and "terrorists" do not operate in a vacuum; they do not operate against ghostly bodies. Neither do they hit only those who are to blame for any condemnable act. Rather, the lives of civilians – Afghan, Cuban, Lebanese, Iraqi, Nicaraguan, Sudanese and so many other women, men, and children – that have nothing to do with "war" or "terrorism," or that believe they are fighting for their "freedom" as the USA does, are the first to be put under excruciating conditions, or, worse, to be radically erased. In eluding a closed definition and, at the same time, being *presented* as something to be fought by all means, the language of "terrorism" and of "Wars on Terrors" not only haunts hearts and minds, but it also imposes pain and suffering to flesh, bone, and blood bodies and legitimizes abject forms of violence.

3.4
Thinking Hauntologically

> Repetition and first time[…] but also repetition and last time […] Let's call it hauntology.
> Jacques Derrida (2006 [1994], p. 10).

In this research, I do not understand the U.S. foreign policy as a behavior across graspable boundaries; rather, I recognize it as a "boundary-producing political performance" (Ashley, 1987, p. 51) that relies upon the metaphysics of presence – politics of reality, politics of remembering, politics of forgetting (Derrida, 1988; Zehfuss, 2003, 2004, 2009). In so doing, not only do I observe, but also have been interrogating traditional divisions like the foreign *versus* the domestic, and the good *versus* the evil, for these lines are not evidently discernible (Ashley, 1987; Campbell, 1998; Vaughan-Williams, 2009b). I also conceive that, as a boundary-producing political performance, the U.S. foreign policy is a significant security practice that, by claiming it wants to overcome fear, institutionalizes fear and *foreignness*. That is, it reinforces the "conventional" and the "dominant" in order to differentiate, exclude and tackle supposedly "threats," "dangers," "enemies," and "identities" (Ashley, 1987; Campbell, 1998).

Boundaries, borders and limits, like those of "security/terrorism" presume an existence *a priori* of unproblematic entities that encounter and interact with one another (Ashley, 1987; Doty, 1996, p. 1; Walker, 2009; Lindahl, 2013). They presume an "ontico-ontological" presence where, in my view, there are traces of traces (of traces). In this sense, "terrorism," and the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" very own condition of possibility lies on appeals to ambiguities and on the *persistence* that is at work through iterability, asymmetry, *différance*, hauntology, supplementarity, a center that continuously escapes its own structurality. In following this position, we can observe that there are attempts to ontico-ontologically instantiate a differentiality that cannot be so (Duque-Estrada, 2020), as it has always already been supplanted by hauntology (Derrida, 2006 [1994]; Auchter, 2014).

As I already mentioned, "terrorism," as well U.S. "Wars on Terrors" could be thought of in observing their open field of endless remittances, for in being endless there is an inexhaustible creation of ever new references, that never reach their final

term (Duque-Estrada, 2020). This way, in order to aggregate more *traces* of the U.S. endeavors against "terrorism," in this section my analysis encompasses both broad and specific narratives on "terrorism" during the 1980s and the 1990s, that is, the National Security Strategies of 1987, 1990 and 1994, as well as the Law Enforcement Bulletins of 1987 and 1999 – for they deal directly with the issue of "terrorism." In other words, I analyze documents that have not been written and put into motion by the same parties, agencies, nor particular ideological groups.

3.4.1
The National Security Strategies

During the Reagan-Bush-Clinton years, 10 NSS were published. However, I chose to pay attention to only three of them – the first NSS submitted by each administration – and, in so doing, I consider the "to-come" of "terrorism" that haunts each one of them. In 1987, the Reagan administration submitted its first NSS. It mentions the word "terrorism" 20 times, and the word(s) "terrorist(s)" 7 times. In an attempt to delineate the major objectives and interests of the USA, it states that it is unavoidable to "deal effectively with threats to the security of the United States and its citizens short of armed conflict, including the threat of terrorism" (p. 4) and to "aid in combatting threats to the stability of friendly governments and institutions from […] state-sponsored terrorism […]." (p. 5).

This NSS finds in the USSR its greatest enemy, for it was "conclusive" (p. 6) that the Soviet regime "established a massive political influence apparatus" (p. 7) and provided continuous assistance to "terrorist" groups (p. 6) by supplying "massive amounts of arms, money, and advisory assistance to forces engaged in terrorist activities" (p. 6) such as the "radical governments [of] Cuba, North Korea, Nicaragua, Syria, and Libya, which deal directly with radical terrorists and insurgents" (p. 6) that, in turn, would have the ultimate goal of targeting "the United States, Western Europe, Japan, and other moderate, pro-Western governments" (p. 6). In other words, the NSS states that "effectively countering terrorism" (p. 7) of "[a]ggressive Marxist regimes […], Soviet client states," (p. 13-14), was "a major national security objective of the United States." (p. 7).

In this NSS, "terrorism" is defined as a "worldwide phenomenon that is becoming increasingly frequent, indiscriminate, and state-supported." (p. 7). Such

a phenomenon was "likely to be a prominent feature of the international landscape for the remainder of this century" (p. 7) because it could directly hurt the U.S. "democratic values" and undermine its "diplomatic efforts for peaceful solutions to conflicts, and erode the foundations of civilized societies" (p. 7).

In Latin America (p. 13), as well as in the Middle East and South Asia (p. 17), "curbing state-sponsored terrorism" (p. 17) was regarded as an urgent matter, because of "the use of terrorism as an instrument of state policy, particularly by Libya, Syria, and Iran" as well as by "Cuba and Nicaragua" (p. 13). This way, to counter "terrorism," the NSS declared the USA would need "to try to isolate and build international pressure against state sponsors of terrorism." (p. 17) like they did in Libya (p. 17), in order to "demonstrate the political, military and economic costs of supporting terrorism." (p. 17-18). And how would that be done? Through the use of "the full range of U.S. military capabilities" (p. 19) and by having "specialized forces – ranging from those required for nuclear deterrence to forces configured to deal with terrorism" (p. 19). This position would require the acceptance that it would be a long-term commitment (p. 32), for the USA had "no illusions about eradicating this menace easily or quickly" (p. 18).

The NSS of 1990 mentions the word "terrorism" 9 times. However, it does not talk about "terrorists." In its attempt to delineate the interests and objectives of the USA in the 1990s, it asserts the necessity of dealing "effectively with threats to the security of the United States and its citizens and interests short of armed conflict, including the threat of international terrorism" (p. 2) – the exact same goal presented by the 1987 NSS. This way, by "combatting threats to democratic institutions […]" (p. 3) like "terrorism" (p. 3), the USA would be able to guarantee a "stable and secure world" (p. 2) and to foster "political freedom, human rights, and democratic institutions."

The NSS 1990 also claims to be concerned with "highly destructive regional wars" (p. 6), especially in areas "troubled by poverty, injustice, racial, religious or ethnic tension" (p. 6) for they would "remain a danger, made even greater by the expansion of the armed forces of regional powers and the proliferation of advanced weaponry." (p. 6). In places like the "Mediterranean Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian ocean" (p. 13), the USA would continue to conduct periodic military exercises (p. 13). They would also be "committed to working to curb the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and other weapons of mass destruction, the

means to produce them, and associated long range delivery systems." (p. 13). And, in so doing, the USA would "confront and build international pressure against those states that sponsor terrorism and subversion." (p. 13).

Following the "New World Order" framework, the NSS of 1990 states the decrease of "East-West tensions" (p. 18). Nevertheless, it asserts that menaces to the USA and to its citizens did not disappear. On the contrary, they could be observed in "lower-order threats like terrorism, subversion, insurgency, and drug trafficking" (p. 28). For that reason, "American forces therefore must be capable of dealing effectively with the full range of threats, including insurgency and terrorism" (p. 28) with the help of Special Operations Forces (p. 28). "Terrorism" appears in the NSS of 1990 as the twin scourge of narcotics trafficking (p. 29) and, together, they would "pose very high priority, but non-traditional, intelligence requirements." (p. 29). For that reason, "the scourge of terrorism, and of states who sponsor it" remained a threat worthy of attention (p. 6).

In the NSS of 1994, the word "terrorism" appears 22 times and the word(s) "terrorist(s)" appear 16 times. This NSS starts with the assumption that "not all security risks are military in nature" (p. 1; p. 6). By declaring this, it followed the idea that "national security has taken on a much broader definition in this post-Cold War era" (p. 14) and, because of that, "intelligence must address a much wider range of threats and dangers." (p. 14). For that reason, "terrorism" would be part of a chain of "transnational phenomena" (p. 1) together with "narcotics trafficking, environmental degradation, rapid population growth and refugee flows" (p. 1) that would pose a series of "security implications for both present and long term American policy." (p. 1).

Consequently, the USA would have the mission to support counterterrorism efforts (p. 6-7) in the form of "punitive attacks, noncombatant evacuation […] and nation assistance" (p. 7). That would be done with the help of "U.S. military forces and assets […] called upon to perform a range of […] important missions" (p. 8), some of them being "conventional forces fielded primarily for theater operations" (p. 8), and others being carried out by "specialized unities and capabilities" (p. 8).

This way, in order to punish "terrorism" and "terrorists," the NSS claimed that "from time to time, we might also find it necessary to strike terrorists at their bases abroad or to attack assets valued by the governments that support them." (p. 8). Also, "in countering international terrorists" (p. 8), the USA would not make

concessions to “terrorists” (p. 8). On the contrary, it would “continue to pressure state sponsors of terrorism, fully exploit all available legal mechanisms to punish international terrorists and help other governments improve their capabilities to combat terrorism.” (p. 8).

The NSS of 1994 also understands that effectively countering “terrorism” (p. 8) would require “close day-to-day coordination among Executive Branch agencies” (p. 8), like the FBI and the CIA. Positive results would come from this kind of interagency cooperation, as well as from “diplomatic and rule-of-law activities, and through close cooperation with other governments and international counterterrorist organizations” (p. 8).

According to this NSS, “terrorists” could be “well-organized” (p. 8) or “more loosely organized” (p. 8). Even so, they represented a “particular dangerous potential threat that must be countered” (p. 8), for not only they were responsible for acts like the “World Trade Center bombing” (p. 8), but they also could make use of “weapons of mass destruction” (p. 8). This NSS also claims that the USA had already made “concerted efforts […] to punish and deter terrorists” (p. 9) because in June 1993, they had determined that “Iraq had plotted an assassination attempt against former President Bush” (p. 9). Because of that “President Clinton ordered a cruise missile attack against the headquarters of Iraq's intelligence service in order to send a firm response and deter further threats.” (p. 9). Additionally, “on March 4, 1994, the United States obtained convictions against the four defendants in the bombing of the World Trade Center.” (p. 9).

It also claims that the USA had also made use of its “leadership and close coordination with other governments and international bodies will continue, as demonstrated by the UN Security Council sanctions against Libya for the Pan Am 103 and UTA 772 bombings.” (p. 9). Besides that, this NSS claims that the USA policy toward Iran was “aimed at changing the behavior of the Iranian government” (p. 25), especially regarding “ its efforts to obtain weapons of mass destruction and missiles, its support for terrorism and groups that oppose the peace process” (p. 25) and “its attempts to undermine friendly governments in the region and its dismal human rights record” (p. 25).

By briefly observing how the NSS of 1987, 1990 and 1994 deal with “terrorism” and “terrorists,” we can understand that all of them follow the requirement of delineating ways of detaining “aggression” and implementing a

"national security strategy" (The NSS archive, 2022). Not only do they claim to diagnose the challenges to U.S. security, but they also prescribe means to avoid or deter hostilities. However, as I repetitively claim in this Dissertation, this kind of policy oriented directive is not innocent. Rather, they are boundary-producing political performances that work violently against an-*other*.

The NSS of 1987, 1990 and 1994, seem to be aligned with the terms already presented in section 3.3, for they lean on the dividing lines between the "Soviet Union" against the "Western, civilized world;" "state-sponsored terrorism" against "friendly governments and institutions;" "aggressive Marxist regimes" against "unprotected friends;" an "unstable world" against a "safe world;" "poor, religious fanatic, ethnic and problematic" places and peoples against "western and friendly allies;" "the East" against "the Wes;" and so on. Also, like most documents I have come to know so far (see Chapter 2), these NSS do not offer a clear definition of what "terrorism" would mean. Rather, they associate 'terrorism' with the idea of a sometimes "well-organized" and sometimes "loosely organized" "worldwide phenomenon," sometimes "state supported," sometimes "not military in nature" but rather a "transnational phenomenon" that "attacks democratic values," that "threatens the world with WMDs"; the "twin scourge of narcotics trafficking" that should be "countered" as soon as possible, otherwise those who would have "weapons of mass destruction" –like the U.S. nuclear bombs – and would put the "Western world" under risk through "assassination attempts," "bombings," and putting the U.S. "democratic values" at risk.

Besides not being able to grasp what "terrorism" would mean, in these NSS we do not get a clear picture of how it "threats," and "attacks values," nor of how frequent is this "increasingly frequent, indiscriminate worldwide phenomenon" (NSS, 1987, p. 7). On the contrary, we are only required to accept what we are told: that "terrorism" comes from *bad* places; that Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Nicaragua, Libya, the Mediterranean sea, the Persian Gulf and the Indian ocean, and many other places and peoples are "dangerous"; that they are asymmetrically and irreconcilably far away from "us;" and that any action to "counter" them – even though being a long-term commitment – would work for the greater good, "our" survival. "Terrorism" haunts these NSS. It is compulsively repeated, it persists, for its temporality does not proceed from the now – neither from the past, nor towards a foreseeable future – but from an un-presentable *to come*.

3.4.2
The FBI Law Enforcement Bulletins

According to the FBI website (2022), the FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin (LEB) is a monthly publication that dates back from 1933. These Bulletins are "distributed to both domestic and foreign law enforcement agencies and professionals in the criminal justice field to present information on a wide range of issues facing the law enforcement community" (FBI, 2001, n.p.). While searching for *traces* of "War*s* on Terror*s*" in the bulletins published during the 1980s and the 1990s, I found 09 bulletins (out of 107) that brought some kind of information about "terrorism."[147]. However, only two of them were entirely dedicated to this issue, the Bulletins of October 1987 and March 1999.

The FBI LEB of October 1987 explores issues on "Terrorism today," "Domestic Terrorism in the 1980s," "The FBI and Terrorism," "Irish Terrorism Investigations," "Narco-Terrorism," and "The FBI's Expanding Role in International Terrorism Investigation." It starts with the assumption that there is almost no doubt that "terrorism" became a "major concern for the United States" (p. 1) and for its "law enforcement community," for, during that period, "bombings, assassinations, and armed robberies" (p. 1) have harmed the U.S. citizens and facilities within and outside its territory.

The bulletin attributes to "terrorism" a "desire to destroy capitalism" (p. 1) and it claims that it works as a "form of organized criminal behavior" (p. 1) that, unlike other crimes "is committed for political purposes" (p. 1). It defines "terrorism" as a "new kind of warfare" that "instead of standing armies, terrorism is committed by individuals or relatively small, but compact, groups" (p. 1). "Terrorism" is also defined as "the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives […] either domestic or international" (p. 14-15). And, among those who perpetrate "terrorist acts," the LEB identifies "white leftists," "Puerto-Rican leftists," "Black groups," "right wing

[147] These are the bulletins of 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1994, 1996 and 1999. All of them are available at: <https://leb.fbi.gov/archives>.

groups," "Jewish extremists," "the Irish," "those associated with Libya, Iran and Syria," and "narco-terrorists of Latin America" (p. 2; 7-13; 18).

For that reason, the Bulletin claims that the FBI should pursue "its counterterrorist responsibility within the law enforcement context, with prosecution of criminal activity as its primary goal." (p. 1), both domestically and internationally[148], for, not only does "terrorism" menace the USA, but it also is a "worldwide problem" that had already harmed, in a larger scale, "Europe, the Middle East and Central America" (p. 1).

The LEB also calls attention to the idea that the success of counterterrorism efforts depends on the cooperation between agencies and departments (p. 2), because "one of our strongest tools in the fight against terrorism is the sharing of information" (p. 4). It claims that the amount of "terrorist incidents" in the USA has declined during that period,

> from 51 in 1982, to 13 in 1984, to 7 in 1985. During 1986 there were 17 confirmed terrorist incidents in the United States. Although there was an increase during 1986, 11 of the 17 incidents were committed by two groups on two dates. The number of active groups and the relative terrorist threat in the United States has not increased. (p. 2).

Also, it claims that, regarding the action of foreigners in the U.S. territory, "there has not been a terrorist act committed […] since 1983." (p. 2). "Terrorism" is conceived, in this LEB, as a global problem (p. 4) and, for that reason, the FBI understands its duty lies on the "use all available foreign and domestic channels, such as Interpol and the FBI's National Crime Information Center (NCIC), to ensure that the appropriate authorities have access to information which may help prevent or resolve a terrorist incident." (p. 4). After all, it assumes that the U.S. Government primary goal should be that of preventing terrorism "in the United States and against U.S. citizens and facilities abroad" (p. 4).

The LEB of March 1999, published twelve years after the first LEB presented here, pays attention to the ways the USA could fight "terrorism" in the future, that is, in the 21st century, for it conceives that "although not new to the United States,

[148] The LEB claims that "Domestic groups are those which operate entirely within the United States or Puerto Rico, and which generally direct their activities against our Government or some element of our society. International groups are those with some degree of foreign direction or support or whose activities transcend national boundaries" (p. 1).

the threat of terrorism is *changing* and *becoming* more deadly." (p. 3). It asserts that even though "low-level incidents" became less frequent during the 1990s, there have been more destructive attacks "with a goal to produce mass casualties and attract intense media coverage." (p. 4). Contrary to the LEB of October 1987, the LEB off March 1999 understands "international terrorism" as the current and most concerning "terrorist threat" (p. 4) that would act against the USA "by targeting U.S. citizens and interests overseas" (p. 4) and through "foreign-based or directed by countries or groups outside the United States." (p. 4).

As stated in the LEB of March 1999, the FBI divided the "current terrorist threat" into three categories, namely: 1) those "threats" that came from "activities of foreign sponsors" (p. 4) such as "Iran, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Libya, Cuba, and North Korea" (p. 4)[149]; 2) "threats" that came from "formalized terrorist groups, such as Lebanese Hizballah, Egyptian Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiyya, and Palestinian HAMAS" (p. 4)[150]; and, 3) the "threat" that came from "loosely affiliated international radical extremists, such as those who bombed the World Trade Center." (p. 4)[151].

It is important to point out that the category of "Domestic Terrorism" also appears in this LEB, and it is defined as a kind of "terrorism" that "involves groups or individuals who operate without foreign direction entirely within the United States and target elements of the U.S. government or citizens" (p. 4). This LEB claims that the "threat" of "Domestic Terrorism" comes from "extreme right-wing" and "extreme left-wing" groups (p. 5). These groups would espouse what the LEB called "conspiracy themes" regarding "the New World Order," "gun control laws," "the approach of the millennium," "white supremacy," "antitaxation," "antiabortion sentiments," "survivalist training," and so on (p. 5). They would act through "violent, criminal actions" (p. 6) and "attempt to force various segments of society

[149] According to the LEB of 1999, "State sponsors remain involved in terrorist activities by funding, organizing, networking, and providing other support and instruction to formal terrorist groups and loosely affiliated extremists." (p. 4).

[150] According to the LEB, "These autonomous organizations have their own infrastructures, personnel, financial arrangements, and training facilities. They can plan and mount terrorist campaigns overseas, as well as support terrorist operations within the United States. Some groups use supporters inside the United States to plan and coordinate acts of terrorism. In the past, these formalized terrorist groups engaged in criminal activities in the United States, such as illegally acquiring weapons, violating U.S. immigration laws, and providing safe havens to fugitives" (p. 4).

[151] According to the LEB, "These extremists do not represent a particular nation. Loosely affiliated extremists may pose the most urgent threat to the United States at this time because they remain relatively unknown to law enforcement. They can travel freely, obtain a variety of identities, and recruit likeminded sympathizers from various countries" (p. 4).

[…] to change their attitudes about issues they consider important" (p. 6). Also, they would make use either of "conventional weapons as bombs and small arms" (p. 6) or "unconventional chemical or biological weapons" (p. 6) in order to attack and harm the USA "at some point in the future" (p. 6).

By looking at "future threats" to the USA and its citizens, this LEB also addresses the "cyberterrorism threat," which is conceived as "terrorism that initiates, or threatens to initiate, the exploitation of or attack on information systems." (p. 6) at state and local levels, as well as in the private sector, for they "have become increasingly dependent on computer hardware, software, networking, and communications technologies for accomplishing for accomplishing operational and administrative goals." (p. 6). This LEB claims that this greater technological sophistication makes the USA vulnerable to "cyberterrorist attacks" that not only would "damage critical computer systems" (p. 6), but also could "jeopardize public safety and U.S. national security" (p. 6). In order to address this array of "terrorist threats," this LEB recommends cooperation at all levels of law enforcement, for "communication and liaison" between them (p. 10) would make the U.S. "counterterrorism machine" better prepared to address "terrorist threats" (p. 10).

When I looked for definitions of "terrorism" in this LEB, I could not find a direct statement regarding this matter. On the contrary, I only find out that "terrorism is unique among crime problems." (p. 1); that "terrorism" is "indiscriminate in its victimization" (p. 1); that "terrorism is changing and becoming more deadly" (p. 3); that "terrorism has become a worldwide problem, and a major threat to U.S. national security" (p. 9); and that "terrorism is a greater threat to democracy than communism or socialism ever were" (p. 18).

After reading these LEB, I could observe that, even though they were not prepared and submitted by a specific administration – like those of Reagan, Bush, or Clinton – they built upon similar vocabularies and fears *presented* in Reagan, Bush and Clinton's Acts, National Security Strategies, State of the Union Addresses, and public speeches concerning "terrorism." The Law Enforcement Bulletins reflect major concerns of their times, that is, attacks from within and elsewhere; "terrorist" groups or individuals that could be White, Black, Latin Americans, leftists, right-wing extremists, Irish, Jewish; "state sponsors of terrorism" that could come from and/or operate from "Cuba, Iran, Latin America,

Libya, Syria, Cuba, or North Korea;" cyberterrorism, and so on. "Terrorism," either when diminishing (LEB, 1987) or increasing (LEB, 1999), would receive a great amount of attention for it, again, appeared as something made by an-*Other* –group, people, country – that had to be eliminated in the name of "National Security," in the name of "our" security. In this sense, I understand that through the works of the FBI, and its recommendations, boundary-producing-political-performances take place and reinforce dangers to-come.

Like the attacks of September 11, 2001, the events of the 1980s and the 1990s seem not to be "forgotten" in these bulletins. They seem to be crossed by destabilizing, silent, asymmetrical, and iterable structural temporalities that cannot be grasped in terms of *present time,* and *pure presence.* They include a *past* that has not passed yet, that is, "terrorism" survives the 1980s and the 1990s, and also deal with a "terrorist" *future-to-come* (*l-à-venir*) that can harm the USA at any time and place, for " it is *changing* and *becoming* more deadly." (FBI LEB, 1999).

3.5
Re-opening re-marks

In this chapter I took three steps: first, I tried to understand the impact of thinking through "ontico-ontological" and "hauntological" perspectives. After that, and in order to not reinforce the same old boundaries that pay attention only to "post-9/11" events that regard "terrorism," I looked for *traces* of the U.S. "War*s* on Terror*s*" during the 1980s and the 1990s; and, in so doing, finally, I also explored some major documents – three National Security Strategies and two FBI Law Enforcement bulletins – so that I could still keep looking for *traces* that haunted the U.S. "War*s* on Terror*s*."

Evidently, this endeavor did not intend to encompass all the times "terrorism" has been conjured. Even so, it tried to observe the "the appeals that make come […] what is not present in the present moment of the call" (Haddock-Lobo, 2011, p. 81)[152], for, as Derrida (2006 [1994], p. 59) puts it, "to conjure means also to exorcise: to attempt both to destroy and to disavow a malignant, demonized, diabolized force, most often an evil-doing spirit, a specter, a kind of ghost who comes back or who still risks coming back *post mortem*."

[152] In the original: '[...] o apelo que faz vir [...] e, portanto, faz vir, por definição, o que não está presente no momento do chamado' (Haddock-Lobo, 2011, p. 81)

After visiting *traces* I used to take for granted in my research, in the next chapter I "move back" to the 21st century and look into more detail to the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" violences through only three – among many – images of "terrorism." That is, I pay attention to "terrorisms" against which "wars" are still being waged. In this sense, the aim of the next chapter is not only to deal with how asymmetrical demarcations can come to live, but, especially, how they allow for politically violent consequences.

Borrowing, once again, from Clarice Lispector (2012) delicate and deep words, I am too a little scared, for I am aware the next instant of the "Wars on Terrors" is the unknown; it is an instant-now already gone, that has become a new instant-now, also already gone…Will I be able to grab hold of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" – "a task forbidden by its very nature"? Its past, its present, its future are slipping away, they are out of joint, and, in so being, they are taking this dissertation farer away from any kind of closure. However, this work will not surrender because of the unknown; rather, it will persist on this slippery groundless ground, in its open-ended, set to fail (Bennington, 2000; Haddock-Lobo, 2011), pursuit of contemplating the U.S. foreign policy and its "Wars on Terrors."

4
Waging “Wars on Terrors”

4.1
Introduction

During the last 23 years, the USA has claimed to be waging “a War on Terror,” “Overseas contingency operations,” “a War Against Al-Qaeda and its allies,” to be “Protecting America Through Lawful Detention of Terrorists,” to be “Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States,” to be “Countering Domestic Terrorism,” and so on (Bush, 2001; Burkeman, 2009; Scahill, 2014; Executive Order Protecting..., 2017; Homeland Security, 2018; Biden, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d, 2021e). Where are these “Wars on Terrors”? How has the USA been waging “Wars on Terrors” during the last years? Where are the examples? Where is the materiality of this *suggestion* that has been made in the last 180 pages? – the reader might ask.

Indeed, so far I have been focusing more attention on examples of “threats” and “promises” to wage “Wars on Terrors” and on attempts to criminalize and combat those considered “dangerous” and/or “strange.” Nevertheless, it is time we pay attention to how these “Wars on Terrors” affect those constitutive outside(r)s (Walker, 2006, 2009; Yamato, 2019) that will *never* be welcomed into what is considered (*by whom?*) a desirable and normal order. It is time we address how the USA has been waging these “Wars on Terrors.”

In the previous chapters, I have already explored academic literature, as well as documents such as Presidential Speeches, Executive Orders, National Security Strategies, and FBI bulletins in order to show how the USA has been constantly trying to define “terrorism” in order to unwelcome, ban, persecute, target, detain, exclude, and punish “terrorists.” I have also pointed out that there is an asymmetrical, counterconceptual, iterable structure that allows for both an unforgettable past and an always-deferred future-*to-come* that encompasses “threats” (i.e. of “terrorism”) to be fought.

Let there be no mistake: in this dissertation, "terrorism" and "terrorist" are understood as belonging to the realm of the *hauntological*, that is, neither do these concepts have a clear-cut definition, nor do they have an established face, body, time, place, and specific manifestation. However, as I show in this chapter, being hauntological facilitates the attempts and claims of defining and *identifying* "terrorism" and its "perpetrators." Hauntology, in this regard, is the condition of possibility to embark on the endeavor of establishing ontico-ontological instantiations. In these attempts, "terrorism" is spatialized – located, differentiated, and deferred; "it" is ontico-ontologically instantiated in space and time (Walker, 2020).

Consequently, "terrorists" are assigned names, faces, characteristics, typical behaviors, and locations. "They" are portrayed as dressing a certain way, congregating in specific places, having particular skin colors, and conforming differently to specific gender norms – at least it is what we are led to believe… until "they" acquire different names, faces, places, skin colors again and again. This is what I mean when I say "terrorists" are de-faced and de-territorialized: who "they are;" what "they" look like; where "they" come from; when "they" act; what "they" think; what / who "they" fight for; how "they" behave is constantly changing – their *identification* is provisional. "We" cannot capture bright, static, high-definition pictures of "them;" however, we are encouraged to believe it is possible to achieve this goal, which *grand finale* would involve the eradication of perceived "evils" from the face of the earth, thereby ensuring peace for "us," the virtuous, humane, democratic, free, civilized, and just peoples.

In this sense, merely recognizing the existence of a "we," a "you" and a "they;" a here and a there; an inside and an outside; an on this side, and a on that side; a familiar, and a foreigner; a known, and an unknown; allows for the constant (re)creation and (re)solidification of boundaries, borders and limits, as well as the institutionalization of conducts, procedures and rituals that authorize/deny entry and exit, recognition and denial, dignity and (in)significance (Koselleck, 204, 2018; Ashley, 1987; Vaughan-Williams, 2009; Walker, 2009; Lindahl, 2013). In this scenario, where some may enter, be part of something and be recognized with dignity, and others may leave –or not even try to enter –, due to the denial of their humanity and value, *lines of enmity* seem to take place and to be an integral part of world politics.

Examples of this dynamic seem to lie everywhere, and we do not necessarily need to reexamine illustrations from yore. We could find substantial examples in the 21st century, considering the U.S. foreign policy discourses in contemporary scenarios. That happens if we consider those called "terrorists," especially those who come from "Muslim," "Arab," "Middle-Eastern" countries, that were/are hunted, intercepted and held indefinitely in places like Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib and Bagram as if they were "*essentially terrorists*"; if we consider "im/migrants," "asylum seekers" and "refugees" whose attempts to seek shelter have strongly been criminalized and denied, on the grounds of them being potential "terrorists-in-waiting" (Fullerton, 2017; Banjo, 2023); as well as those who claim for racial, social and gender recognition and dignity, such as the "antifa" and the "Black Lives Matter" movements, which have been classified as "violent extremist" dissident movements, de-legitimated and criminalized side by side with "white supremacists" such as the "Ku Klux Klan (KKK)," the "Proud Boys" and those who invaded the U.S. Capitol in January 6th, 2021 – both being treated as "domestic terrorists."

These three "images" – among many others – that haunt the USA, are ontico-ontologically instantiated as "terrorism," that is, they are materialized in bodies that are hunted, persecuted, detained, tortured, denied entry, denied recognition, denied dignity, and, in so being, they are radically excluded. More than that, these attempts to ontico-ontologize "terrorism" place, side by side, as "terrorists," those whose political demands will always be irreconcilable. This way, this chapter aims at illustrating how, during the last 23 years, the USA has been waging "Wars on Terrors" in attempting to ontico-ontologically define – persecute, detain, ban, deny entry and exclude – peoples, groups, countries, and movements. In other words, this chapter starts with the assumption that the USA is always and continuously hunting "(un)becoming terror(ist)s."

Having these ideas in mind, this chapter is organized as follows: after this introduction (section 4.1), in section 4.2 I briefly explore what I mean when I invoke the word "war," for, as I mentioned on Chapter 2, there is an enduring debate – on political and academic circles – on which metaphor – of "war" or "crime" – should be applied when referring to the way the USA deals with "terrorism." This way, in this section, I explain why I still choose to talk about "Wars on Terrors." In sections 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5, I propose to analyse three images of "terrorism", those being: the portrayal of "Muslims, Arabs and Middle-Easterners as *essentially terrorists*;" the

depiction of "im/migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees as 'terrorists' *in the making*;" and the classification of "antifa and white supremacists as *domestic terrorists*." Finally, in section 4.6 I propose that those labeled as "terrorists" are constitutive outside(r)s of the inter/national – an idea further developed in Chapter 5. This way, section 4.6 constitutes an invitation to Chapter 5, where I finally weave together the *textiles* unraveled in this dissertation and illustrate how "terrorisms" elude the U.S. security.

4.2
"War! What is it good for?"

"War, I despise. 'Cause it means destruction of innocent lives. War means tear to thousands of mothers eyes when their sons go off to fight and lose their lives […];" "War is an enemy to all mankind. The thought of war blows my mind […];" "War has shattered many young man's (*sic.*) dreams. Made him (*sic.*) disabled bitter and mean. Life is much too short and precious to fight mighty wars these days. War can't give life. It can only take it away." These are the answers Edwin Starr (1970) gives when wondering "War, what is it good for?"[153].

While I do concur that "war" yields no positive outcomes, I emphasize the necessity of continuously and carefully elucidating our opposition to, condemnation of, disdain for, critique of, and denouncement of "Wars on Terrors." In this sense, it is crucial to pay attention to a subject incessantly invoked in this discussion, that is, "war." And why is that? Because, similar to "terrorism" – and many other *proper names* that linger in the inter/national – "war" can be equally challenging to contemplate and, in so being, it is equally challenging to critique, condemn, and denounce. For this reason, it is important to present some meanings attributed to "war" in order to understand how it circulates, justifies violence, and is accepted as a ready-to-hand political organizing concept. Only after that can I position this dissertation *vis-à-vis* "war."

If we repeat the move I have been taking during this dissertation and look for meanings of "war" in dictionaries, we can see definitions such as: "a situation in which two or more countries or groups of people fight against each other over a

[153] To listen to Edwin Starr's song, access: <https://youtu.be/ztZI2aLQ9Sw>.

period of time" (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 2023, n.p.); "1 (a) a state of usually open and declared armed hostile conflict between states or nations; (b) a period of such armed conflict" (Merriam-Webster, 2023, n.p.); or "2 (a): a state of hostility, conflict, or antagonism; (b): a struggle or competition between opposing forces or for a particular end." (Merriam-Webster, 2023, n.p.). Online [Brazilian] Portuguese Dictionary (2023, n.p., my translation) also provides interesting suggestions, in saying that "war" is:

> An armed struggle among nations or between parties; a combat, a battle.
> An armed conflict among different peoples or ethnicities, seeking to impose something through force and violence, with the aim of protecting their own interests. Armed combat; conflict: the demonstration ended in war.
> Any fight without weapons: ideological, religious war.
> A hostile conflict […].
> A declared fight against something harmful: war on dengue[154].

Considering these everyday understandings of "war," we can observe some of its supposedly attributes, those being: the presence of frictions, violent encounters, hostilities, conflicts, antagonism, struggles, competition, opposition – among states, parties, different peoples, and/or different ethnicities. Also, it is possible to bear in mind that "war," according to these definitions, is a "means to an end," a fight over a period of time to impose something – ideologies, values, religions – or to protect some*thing* –"our" values, interests, ideologies, religions – through force/violence or without resorting to weapons.

"War" in this sense, appears as something *against* an-*other* (Yamato, 2020) – sometimes innocent, sometimes not innocent – group, ethnicity, state; or *against* an-*other thing*, such as Dengue, COVID-19, Poverty, Famine, Authoritarianism; LGBTQIA+ -phobias, and, of course, "terrorism." It also, according to Edwin Starr (2017), spreads destruction, suffering and pain.

We can also resort to IR Dictionaries to see how, conventionally, we are led to think about "war" *in a nutshell.* Jaco Plano and Roy Otton (1988), in *The International Relations Dictionary,* say that "war" consists of "hostilities between

[154] In the original: "Luta armada entre nações ou entre partidos; combate, batalha. Conflito armado entre povos ou etnias diferentes, buscando impor algo pela força e pela violência, com o objetivo de proteger seus próprios interesses. Combate armado; conflito: a manifestação terminou em guerra. Qualquer luta sem armas: guerra ideológica, religiosa. Conflito hostil: guerra entre escolas. Luta declarada contra algo prejudicial: guerra à dengue" (Dicio, 2023, n.p.).

states or within a state or territory undertaken by means of armed force." (p. 187). The authors say that there exist a "legal state of war," which arises when two or more states *formally declare* a state of hostilities between them. They also contend that, despite debates surrounding the legality of "wars," *de facto* "wars" take place whenever an organized group employs any kind of force against another group (p. 187).

Guilherme Silva and Williams Gonçalves, who published a *Dicionário de Relações Internacionais,* define "war" as

> […] the conduct of systematic acts of material or psychological violence, carried out in a more or less organized way by opposing social groups, motivated by (or in pursuit of) interests considered essential and which were not obtained by peaceful means of dispute resolution. Among these interests stand out those of political, territorial, economic, legal, ideological, psychological, and social orientation (2010, p. 107, my translation)[155].

In turn, Peter Lamb and Fiona Robertson (2017), in the *Historical Dictionary of International Relations,* define "war" as "organized political violence on a large scale" (p. 367). They also argue that "wars" alter the trajectory of history and represent a pivotal mechanism through which transformations occur within the international system, leading to the establishment of political authority and sovereignty within the state (p. 367).

In the *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics and International Relations,* Brown, Mclean and McMillan define "war" as an "armed conflict between two or more parties, usually fought for political ends" (2017, p. 1253). They also underscore the complexity inherent in delineating the precise boundaries of this "signifier," primarily owing to its pervasive use in conjunction with a myriad of modifying adjectives, such as "world war," "cold war," "trade wars," "liberation wars," and so forth (p. 1253).

These definitions infuse "war" with several nuanced facets. They portray it as something that unfolds when peaceful means, such as negotiations, cease to be

[155] In the original: "Podemos definir a guerra como a condução de atos sistemáticos de violência material ou psicológica, executados de forma mais ou menos organizada por grupos sociais que se contrapõem, motivada por (ou em busca de) interesses considerados essenciais e que não foram obtidos por meios pacíficos de solução de controvérsia. Dentre esses interesses, destacam-se os de ordem política, territorial, econômica, legal, ideológica, psicológica e social" (Silva and Williams, 2010, p. 107).

viable options. They portray "war" as something driven either by economic, political, ideological, psychological, territorial, and/or legal motivations. Furthermore, they present "war" as a phenomenon that can be recognized as a legal, organized practice/force. Additionally, they acknowledge its potential, wherein it can serve as a catalyst for transformative change or as a mechanism for upholding an established order, political authority, and sovereignty. It is also important to bear in mind that these definitions focus on *declarations* of "war," on its *causes* and *justifications*. However, they do not take into account those upon whom "war" is waged.

Even if there is an inherent difficulty in defining "war," its contemplation is indispensable for those devoted to the study of international relations (Silva and Williams, 2010). For this reason, certainly, those, like me, who have been immersed in international relations literature, have come across authors who tried to define "war" or that deal with this word as a central subject of their contributions. See, for instance Thucydides (2009 [400 BC]); Sun Tzu (2018 [unknown]); Clausewitz, (2007 [1832]); Angell, (2002 [1909]); Schmitt (2005 [1922]; 2007 [1932]; 2011 [1937]); Morgenthau (2002 [1948]); Wright (2002 [1959]); Aron (2002 [1962]); Galtung (1969); Singer (1976); Bull (2002 [1977]); Waltz (1979; 2001); Enloe (2014 [1989]); Keegan (1995); Mearsheimmer (2001); Duffield (2007); Kaldor (2012); Sjöberg (2013); Butler (2016); Baylis *et al.* (2019); Reus-Smitt (2020) – to name, *inadequately*, only a few of them).

Clausewitz (2007) is perhaps the first name that comes to mind[156] when someone asks us to define "war," as he famously stated that "war is nothing but the continuation of politics by other means" (p. 7). During the 19th century, this author attempted to assemble a treaty titled *On War*. In this posthumously published work, he defines "war" as akin to a large-scale duel (p. 13), where opposing sides strive to impose their will upon one another (p. 13). "War" is, then, depicted as a "dangerous business" (p. 14) driven by the impulse to destroy the "enemy" (p. 15).

As such, it does not represent the action of living forces upon lifeless masses; rather, it embodies a collision of living forces (p. 16), for without resistance "war"

[156] According to Lamb and Robertson (2017), Clausewitz's thought has influenced international relations scholars – especially Realists and English School thinkers – who understand "war" as a "rational instrument of state foreign policy" (p. 368) and as a "key mechanism for order within an international society." Kenneth Waltz, known as a "structural realist" is an example of this position, for he considers that "war is a means of adjustment within the international system" (1979, p. 195).

would cease to be a possibility (p. 15-16). Also, according to Clausewitz (2007), "war" is "a serious means to a serious end" (p. 28), a trinity of *enmity*, *hatred*, and *violence* (p. 30) behind which always lurk political reasons and political objects (p. 28). Consequently, it is neither considered an isolated act (p. 19), nor a short-lived endeavor, as it never yields final outcomes (p. 19).

It is important to bear in mind that, in his book, Clausewitz (2007) resorts to dichotomies such as "civilized *versus* savages," for he believes that "wars between civilized nations are far less cruel and destructive than wars between savages" (p. 14). This kind of definition, as well as many others present in his work, establishes boundaries, borders and limits between "wars" conducted in accordance with established norms and those that deviate from such standards, consequently establishing criteria for defining good and bad conduct in "war." This perspective suggests that the fundamental issue might not lie with "war" itself, nor with the imposition of "our" will upon the "enemy," or even the collision of living forces; rather, it is the manner in which "war" is conducted that would determine its ethical implications.

Raymond Aron (2002) is another prominent author that thinks about *Paix et Guerre entre les nations.* His work is considered a 20th-century treaty on both "war" and "international relations" (Hassner, 2005). Aron, who lived through a tumultuous period marked by numerous conflicts (1905-1983) – including two "World Wars," the "Cold War," and "decolonization wars" – engages in reflections on the underlying *causes* that drive peoples and states into "war." In so doing, his inquiry seeks to identify patterns, regularities and root causes that precipitate "war".

A reader of Clausewitz, Aron shares the perspective that "war" is a violent endeavor aimed at imposing "our" will upon the "enemy." He argues that this sentence is as pertinent today as it was during Clausewitz's time (p. 70). Aron (2002) further elaborates on the notion that "war" is a social phenomenon, and that, in so being, it implies the existence of politically organized collectivities engaged in using violence against each other, as a means to achieve their objectives, which is to impose their will (p. 70).

While Aron acknowledges the primacy of "peace" over "war," he emphasizes the near impossibility of the complete elimination of "war" and the immense difficulty in averting it altogether. Following this path, Aron (2002) draws our attention to an important point: despite a widespread notion the notion that "war

will bring its own demise,"[157] history has demonstrated that the "military monster" consistently resurfaces, often rejuvenated, and invigorated by the development of more efficient means of destruction, such as the advent of nuclear bombs (p. 770-771) – or, thinking about "our" times, the contemporary innovations like the use drones in the so-called "smart wars." That is why Aron (2002) advocates, instead, for the containment of "war" in both its objectives and methods.

In *A History of Warfare* (1993), Keegan aligns with the aforementioned authors by ambitiously proposing to craft a comprehensive historical narrative of "war." However, he takes a distinctive path by highlighting that "war is not the continuation of politics by other means" (p. 22), a viewpoint he finds incomplete. This perspective, according to the author, presupposes the existence of states, their interests, and rational calculations. Keegan provocatively directs our gaze to the notion that "war" predates the emergence of the "state, diplomacy, and strategy" by millennia (p. 22). "War", according to him, is as old as humanity itself. He illustrates this argument by delineating four different "cultures of war" of "four civilizations": Easter Island, the Zulus, the Mamluks, and the Samurai[158].

Keegan (1993) sustains that human beings are inherently "cultural animals," and that the expression of our violence in the form of "war" is a reflection of our "cultural aberrations" (p. 23). He underscores that the very states we inhabit, their institutions and their laws have often emerged from ferocious conflicts (p. 23). Moreover, he contends that we are perpetually inundated with daily reports of bloodshed, whether occurring in distant lands or in places closer to home. In this context, Keegan (1993) sustains that "war" is the continuation of culture – and not politics – by other means.

Mary Kaldor (2012) is another author often invoked, especially in discussions regarding recent conflicts, for she famously coined the dichotomic ideas of "old wars" and "new wars." Kaldor (2012) explains that the word "war" together with the adjective "new" is used to highlight the political nature of new kinds of violence: "new wars". These *new* manifestations, according to her, involve blurring

[157] This idea is illustrated in doctrine of "nuclear deterrence," which posits that the catastrophic aftermath of a heavily armed "war," particularly a "nuclear war" could compel parties involved to pursue a conflict resolution or generate a profound desire for peace. See, for example: Schelling, Thomas C. 2008 [1966]. Arms and Influence. Yale: Yale University Press.

[158] See more at: Chapter 1. War in Human History. In Keegan, John. 1993. A History of Warfare. Vintage Books, New York.

scenarios. In this sense, we would not be able to define "war" only as a "violence between states or organized political groups for political motives" (p. 2). Rather, "new wars" involve what is also called "organized crime," "large-scale violations of human rights," "civil wars;" "low-intensity conflicts;" "hybrid wars;"[159] "post-modern wars;"[160] "degenerate warfare;"[161] "remnants of war;"[162] and so forth.

Kaldor (2012) is another reader of Clausewitz. She considers "war" as a social activity (p. 15). Beyond defining "war" as a type of violence, she further elaborates on the idea that "what we tend to perceive as war, what policy makers and military leaders define as war, is, in fact, a specific phenomenon which took shape in Europe somewhere between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries" (p. 15). Additionally, she contends that "war" has undergone different phases – different modes of warfare, military forces, strategies, and techniques (p. 17). Because of that, "war" has forged an intricate connection with the modern state (p. 15).

This way, Kaldor's overarching input is that "war" remained, for long, the same phenomenon, as it happened under the umbrella of a "centralized, 'rationalized', hierarchically ordered, territorialized state" (p. 17). She suggests, however that as the traditional centralized and territorialized modern state "evolved" within the context of emerging global processes, our contemporary conception of "war" gradually became outdated, leading her to favor the term "new wars." Nevertheless, Kaldor (2012) asserts that the foundational cornerstone of the monopolization of "legitimate violence" still lies with the state. Put differently, states often invoke their interests to legitimize/justify "wars." This way, she contends that when state interests solidify as the predominant rationale for war, non-

[159] According to Kaldor (2012, p. 2), "hybrid wars" is a term that "nicely captures the blurring of public and private, state or non-state, formal and informal that is characteristic of new wars; it is also used to refer to a mixture of different types of war (conventional warfare, counterinsurgency, civil war, for example)."

[160] According to Lamb and Robertson (2017), "the postmodern war thesis draws on the 'Revolution in Military Affairs' debate, which notes the developments in technology, particularly precision-guided bombs, that has given Western states a huge military advantage over their adversaries. This advantage enables advanced states to fight wars, or at least to deploy airpower, despite a strong resistance to the taking of casualties. Unwillingness to deploy ground troops and to take higher casualties, however, indicates an unwillingness of states in the West, particularly given their experience in Afghanistan and Iraq, to get too embroiled in a war, beyond a limited use of force." (p. 368)

[161] According to Kaldor (2012), the idea of "degenerate wars" imply that "there is a continuity with the total wars of the twentieth century and their genocidal aspects; the term draws attention to the decay of the national frameworks, especially military forces." (p. 3)

[162] Kaldor (2012) shows that the idea of "remnants war" means that "war in general (what I call old wars) has declined and that what is left is banditry often disguised as political conflict." (p. 3)

state actors lose their ability to claim to pursue a "just cause" through violent means (p. 19).

The aforementioned authors – except for Keegan (1993) – pay especial attention to an idea/history of "war" related to the European context. As we delve into their explanations, we can observe that they establish a connection between the "history of war" and European states engaging in frequent conflicts, driven by ambitions related to territorial expansion, dynastic claims, and colonial pursuits. Within this perspective, "war" is perceived as an accepted means to maintain a "balance of power" (Brown, McLean, and McMillan, 2017, p. 1254). Furthermore, conventional approaches to "war" emphasize that during the late 19th and 20th centuries, there emerged a growing body of laws governing "war," aimed at imposing constraints on the utilization of increasingly destructive technological advancements in weaponry. This shift would have been prompted by the unexpected and profoundly shocking human and societal costs incurred by large-scale "wars" (Aron, 2002; Kaldor, 2012; Brown, McLean, and McMillan, 2017, p. 1254).

An example that illustrates this scenario is the creation of the League of Nations (1919-1945), immediately after the end of the "First World War." This organization was later succeeded by the United Nations (1945-present), whose fundamental document, the *United Nations Charter*, establishes, in its *Preamble*, that "[w]e the peoples of the United Nations [are] determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" (UN, 1945, n.p.). Consequently, this evolving landscape would give rise to a more robust legal framework surrounding the practice of "war," ultimately rendering it *illegal*, *morally unacceptable* and *reprehensible*. However, it is important to note that this legal framework acknowledges *exceptions*: "war" is deemed illegal and immoral except when undertaken in the context of "self-defense and collective security" (UN, 1945; Brown, McLean, and McMillan, 2017, p. 1254).

The aforementioned authors – now including Keegan (1993) – also appear to converge on the notion that "war" is a phenomenon inherent to "human nature." By considering "war" a political, social or cultural phenomenon, they suggest that "we," as humans, possess an innate inclination toward violence and selfishness.

It is also important to acknowledge that there are numerous divergent positions among IR scholars regarding "war." Even though I cannot revisit them in

detail, I must highlight that, as Lamb and Robertson (2017) underscore, IR theorists under the "liberal school of thought take a different path, as they perceive "war not as a function of the international system, but as a breakdown in that system" (p. 368). In this sense, "wars" would reflect the states' incapacity of effectively articulate and align common interests (Silva and Williams, 2010).

On the other hand, "constructivists" view "war" as a socially constructed mechanism for resolving disputes and imposing values. In this context, they promote a concept of "war" rooted in the interplay between conflict and cooperation (Silva and Williams, 2010). "Postcolonial" and "decolonial thinkers," in turn, call our attention to the idea that "war" is a result of imperial-colonial oppression against marginalized/ subaltern populations. "War" history, in this sense, has been the history of the powerful and, in so being, obliterates the experiences of those colonized peoples (Spivak, 2004). The divergences go on.

I should also emphasize that although I do not engage directly with Carl Schmitt during this dissertation, I acknowledge that his work (2005; 2007; 2011) inform much of what I mentioned through Koselleck's contributions (2004; 2018). Schmitt's analyses are concerned with the systematic (re)structuration of political concepts, such as those of "friend," "enemy," "foe," "humanity," "outlaw of humanity" and, of course, "war." Roberto Yamato (2020, p. 4), for example, highlights that, as for Schmitt, the name – *concept, quasi-concept, idea of* – "war" underwent profound changes during the first half of the 20th century. More specifically, for Schmitt (2011), "war" once held the position of a "non-discriminatory concept" but turned into a "discriminating one."

On the one hand, the non-discriminatory understanding of "war" goes hand in hand with the assumption that there is a "just enemy" (*justus hostis*), a symmetrical opponent within which one would hold a relation of both equality and sovereignty (Schmitt, 2011; Yamato, 2020). On the other hand, however, the discriminatory notion of "war" admit that there are those who are not "enemies;" rather, they are *foes,* i.e. – *hostis generi humanis,* unpolitical, a-moral, outlaws enemies of humanity (Schmitt, 2011; Yamato, 2020)[163].

[163] As per Yamato, "[t]he category of the foe displaces the friend/enemy dualism, suggesting another conceptual differentiation within enmity […] [T]he foe represented an extreme form of enmity and war, to be differentiated from that of the enemy Schmitt opposes to the friend […] After all, the enemy is a brother […] The enemy is part of the family of the European public order of sovereign

In this sense, whereas a symmetric, sovereign friend can sometimes turn into a "*hostis*" – but become a friend again at the end of hostilities –, the foe will always be the mortal, exceptional, absolute, outlaw enemy of humanity (Schmitt, 2007, p. 41; Yamato, 2020). Here, we may observe the "criminalization of enmity" (Yamato, 2019; 2020), for the foe is not an equal, symmetrical brother; rather, his/her very existence is heinous, it is a *crime against normality*. This way, as I already mentioned in chapter 2, we may acknowledge that there are those who go under restrictions, segregation, prohibition, persecutions, detentions, bans, and extermination because asymmetric, iterable, antithetical relations remain available to be called upon (Koselleck, 2004; 2018).

This way, we should have in mind that "effectiveness and persuasiveness" of "war" and other [*quasi*-]*concepts of the political* are not exclusively "determined by the content of its individual conception, but are fundamentally influenced by the role it plays within a broader conceptual system" (Yamato, 2020, p. 4)[164]. That is why these perceptions of "war," asymmetry, criminalization of enmity, and discrimination are taken into account here.

I must also highlight that, since I follow the contributions of "poststructuralists" and "postfoundational" thinkers, when I think of "war" I am concerned with directing my efforts toward questioning prevailing worldviews by challenging the notion of a singular, unchanging reality. Working from this perspective, I recognize that attempting to fully encapsulate the concept of "war" and distill it into a singular, absolute meaning is an insurmountable task.

Much like "terrorism," its definitions vary, float, are emptied and re-filled. That is why we encounter distinctions such as "total and limited wars," "regional and world wars," "conventional and unconventional wars," "insurgency and ethnic wars" (Garnett and Baylis, 2019, p. 74), "irregular and regular warfare" (Kiras, 2019), "legal and illegal wars" (UN Charter, 1945), "old and new wars" (Kaldor,

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states. The enemy is an-other friend. One may have differences with one's brother, one may discuss and enter into conflict with one's brother, but one does not hate one's brother mortally, nor does one desire or will to annihilate one's own brother. Thus, the public enemy, the *justus hostis*, the brother, cannot be a foe. He is not (morally) evil, nor (aesthetically) ugly, nor to be hated (Schmitt, 2007a: 28-29, footnote 9; Schwab, 1970:51; Kennedy, 1998)" (Yamato, 2020, p. 13-15).

[164] Yamato (2020, p. 4) stresses that Schmitt, "[…] in engaging with the structural conceptual implications of the transformations of the concept of war […] observed that 'the consistency, and persuasiveness of a concept in international law is determined not only through the content of its isolated conception, but also fundamentally through the position of the concept in a conceptual system' (Schmitt, 2011, p. 36)."

2012), “offensive and defensive wars” (UN Charter, 1945), “just and unjust wars” (Vattel, 2004), “cultural and political wars” (Keegan, 1993), and so forth. Consequently, it would be highly unexpected if these significantly diverse activities – perhaps linked only by their involvement with violence and opposition – could be comprehensively explained through a singular lens (Garnett and Baylis, 2019).

“War’s” residual remnants may persist, yet they appear equally elusive when it comes to being conceptually apprehended. However, while acknowledging the inherent complexity of this endeavor, it is important to emphasize that certain views on “war” inform this dissertation. For I too assume that if “we are to oppose war”, we have to pay attention to the “conditions under which war is waged” (Butler, 2016, p. 9).

First, “war” is perceived, here, as a marker that intricately intertwines with processes of (re)constructing and upholding systems of political authority (Reus-Smit, 2020, p. 68). This way, the idea of a legal or just “war” “relies on the controllability of instruments of destruction” (Butler, 2016, p. 16). Second, “war” is not regarded merely as a random act of violence; rather, it is considered as some-*thing* with a purpose, as some-*thing* which violence serves a multitude of ends.

Third, “war” is far from being considered a meticulously “organized enterprise.” It is not surgical. Instead, it is messy and chaotic, for “in war, one operates with a battleaxe and without a medical licence on a patient who is trying to amputate your arm, in the dark.” (Ferris, 2019, p. 238). This way, the destructive power of “war” exceeds its targets and knows no bounds (Butler, 2016). In so doing, it allows for territorial invasions, coups, the suppression of dissent, and the radical exclusion of certain peoples. More, it perpetrates heinous acts such as pillage and rape, and reinforces violent hierarchies (Reus-Smitt, 2020).

Fourth, “war” forms, targets and manages populations. It makes distinctions between valuable and expendable lives. In so doing, it perpetuates a state of precarity – in a fragile balance between life and death (Butler, 2016). This way, “war” ends lives in the name of defending lives (Butler, 2016). Fifth, “war” is and always has been a “brutal business […] in which victory will go to those with the material and emotional resources required to stand the strain” (Moran, 2019, p. 271). Sixth, “war” normalizes a sense of constant instability and precarity in everyday existence (Butler, 2016). Seventh, “war” distributes precarity unequally,

in a sense that there is no destruction and no loss if it is not happening at "our side" (Butler, 2016).

Eighth, "war" excludes versions of "reality" expelling them to a "domain of unreality" and, in so doing, it interdicts mourning (Butler, 2016; Zehfuss, 2004). By being ungrievable, some lives simply cannot be lost or destroyed, "because they already inhabit a lost and destroyed zone; they are, [ontico-]ontologically, and from the start, already lost and destroyed, which means that when they are destroyed in war, nothing is destroyed." (Butler, 2016, p. 17). Ninth, "war" is long, costly, and destructive, as all "sides" suffer (Ferris, 2019). Tenth, "war" is inconclusive. Eleventh, "War! What is it good for? Absolutely nothing!" It is "nothing but a heartbreaker" and "friend only to the undertaker" (Starr, 1970).

This way, I do not consider that "Wars on Terrors" are "new wars" or "cultural wars," but rather inherently political. And, here, we must keep in mind the aforementioned differentiation of symmetric and asymmetric relations (Koselleck, 2004, 2018; Yamato, 2020; Schmitt, 2005, 2007, 2011). Meaning it is one thing to speak of "war" as a symmetric, sovereign, regulated enterprise; and it another to think of "Wars on Terrors," for they rely upon asymmetric, iterable, antithetical representations; upon *différance*, supplementarity, iterability, the metaphysics of presence and logocentrism; upon the politics of ontology, of reality, of forgetting and of teleology; and upon discriminations and demarcations of boundaries, borders and limits (Derrida, 1972, 1968, 1978, 1988, 2016; Koselleck, 2004; 2018; Ashley, 1987; Campbell, 1998; Walker, 2009; Lindahl, 2013; Zehfuss, 2003, 2004, 2009; Royle, 2003).

To label "Wars on Terrors" as "new" would imply that in the past, only a specific kind of conflict occurred – between states and well-defined groups. Such a classification would also suggest a different "nature" of contemporary forms of "war." Moreover, it would assume that large-scale violations against various marginalized groups, such as indigenous populations, immigrants, enslaved individuals, women, Muslims, Arabs, Middle Easterners, Africans, Asians, Latin Americans, and the LGBTQIA+ community – i.e., all those considered as "terrorizing others" – besides from being a "novelty" are something other than a violence that distributed precarity unequally.

Similarly, if I were to assert that "war" is not a political endeavor but a cultural one – as argued by Keegan (1993) – I would be endorsing a dichotomy

between "wars" waged under the banner of the state and those occurring outside of it. However, this oversimplification does not align with the position of this dissertation. Instead, I maintain that spectral remnants of "war" persist as the ghostly presence of opposition, hostility, violent encounters – as an asymmetric iterable structure that survives through different modes of warfare, techniques, and attacks.

Whether we examine examples from the Easter Island or the Samurai, of "World Wars" and "Liberation Wars," or of the "War on Drugs" and "Wars on Terrors" some-*thing* survives: the assertion of political authority by those who claim the right to propagate a "correct, desirable, free, democratic, just, and humane" world through the imposition of values and behaviors, territorial invasions, dissent suppression, and the radical exclusion of entire populations. This enterprise, marked by its messy, asymmetric, iterable, elusive, and destructive nature, is the enterprise of the "Wars on Terrors".

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Before starting the next section, I need to briefly emphasize that I am aware that there is a debate on whether the way the USA deals with "terrorism" should be considered through the idea of a "war" or also by the idea of a "crime," that is, if the USA "wages a war on terrorism" of if it "criminalizes it" (Winkler, 2006). According to Bonditti (2014, pp. 198-202), during the 1980s the FBI strategically moved away from traditional views that framed "terrorism" solely as interstate or transnational violence, by invoking the idea of "domestic terrorism" and emphasizing its supposed illegality[165].

[165] "[…] the FBI was the only agency that suggested a definition of 'domestic terrorism' along with one of 'international terrorism'. This fact is revealing of the FBI's dual institutional culture, with both law enforcement and counter-intelligence prerogatives. As with the other agencies, the FBI's definition of 'international terrorism' highlights the idea of foreign state sponsorship. This allowed the federal agency to use, before the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, the accusation of 'conspiracy with a foreign power' to justify the use of wire-tapping against individuals in US territory and, from the 1990s, the interception of electronic messages. If its definition of "domestic terrorism" was not very useful from a legal point of view – as no specific legal provision was instated in matters of 'domestic terrorism' – it was no less a (rhetorical) weapon allowing for the political disqualification of specific groups such as Puerto Ricans or extreme-right groups. The 'terrorist' label casts a shadow of permanent suspicion on these groups and allowed the FBI to use its full arsenal of investigatory powers against them. While this definition of 'domestic terrorism' claimed by the FBI from 1987 onwards did not change the priority given by the US administration to the fight against 'international terrorism', it did create an alternative perspective to the 'terrorism' understood as an illegitimate weapon used by states in order to advance their strategic or foreign policy objectives. For the FBI at least, it opened the field of antiterrorism to its investigatory activities and crime-fighting prerogatives, as opposed to pertaining solely to the counterintelligence prerogatives of the agency" (Bonditti, 2014, p. 202).

This shift allowed for adjustments to the approach in dealing with those labeled as "terrorists," meaning the FBI idea of "domestic terrorism" redirected the responsibility from intelligence services or the military to law enforcement agencies, such as the police. As a result, it reinforced the division between "international" and "domestic terrorism," classifying the former as inter-state *warlike violence* and the latter as an interpersonal transgression, that is, a *criminal act*.

However, as I already pointed out, in this dissertation I attempt not to reinforce divides such as "domestic/international." In so doing, I consider that the criminalization of "terrorism" and "terrorists" does not exclude the idea that the USA has been waging "Wars on Terrors." On the contrary, I understand that there is not "crime/war" divide, but an entanglement where, through political authority, asymmetric, counterconceptual iterable relations and the control of means of destruction, messy and chaotic "Wars on Terrors" take place – whether "inside" or "outside" the USA –, for they target and manage populations, end lives in the name of defending lives, detain peoples in the name of freedom, and brutally normalize the precarious distribution of everyday existence.

4.3
Arabs, Middle Easterners and Muslims as "essentially terrorists"

> No sleep. Water diet. Every move behind my door made me stand up in a military-like position with my heart pounding like boiling water. My appetite was non-existent. I was waiting every minute on the next session of torture. I hoped I would die and go to heaven; no matter how sinful I am, these people can never be more merciful than God. Ultimately we all are going to face the Lord and beg for his mercy, admitting our weaknesses and our sinfulness. I could hardly remember any prayers, all I could say was, "Please, God, relieve my pain…"
>
> Mohammedou Ould Slahi (2015).

> I couldn't imagine it, in the beginning, that this could happen. But I wished for my death, that I could kill myself, because no one over there would stop what was going on.
>
> Hussein (apud Amnesty International, 2006).

The U.S. "Wars on Terrors" discourses allow for struggles that take place on many fronts, including Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, launched in 2002 (Lee, 2018); Operation Iraqi Freedom, launched in 2003 (Ormond, 2015, 2018); the identification of Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as an "Axis of Evil" (Ormond, 2015, 2018); the use of drones for persecution and lethal actions

(Chamayou, 2015); targeted killings, detention, secrecy and surveillance (Vedaschi and Graziani, 2023); as well as the management and manipulation of human lives, including the extreme practice of torture (Amnesty International, 2002, 2006, 2023; Gourevitch and Morris, 2008; IRC, 2004; Butler 2014; 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2011, 2022).

A brief online search can uncover unsettling images, accounts, and documents describing the mistreatment, degradation, and abuse of detainees held in facilities such as Guantánamo Bay, still operational in Cuba, and[166] Abu Ghraib, closed in 2014, in Iraq. In these facilities, detainees have been held without formal charges, denied access to legal representation, and isolated from their families, perpetuating a cycle of ongoing mistreatment (Human Rights Watch, 2022; UNHR-OHC, 2022; Amnesty International, 2006, 2023).

Just a short distance from the shores of the United States – approximately 1,700 miles or 2,735 kilometers away – lies the Guantánamo Bay detention facility,

[166] It is crucial to emphasize that Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib are just two instances among numerous others where torture was employed under the banner of inter/national security. Regrettably, I cannot provide an exhaustive analysis of all of them, even though they merit our full attention. Nevertheless, it is essential to understand that, as outlined in the 2011 Human Rights report titled *Getting away with torture*, in the 21st century, coercive interrogations by military personnel can be traced back to Afghanistan (at least) as early as 2001 (2011, p. 38). The report states that both the CIA and US military operatives began questioning detainees apprehended in Afghanistan or Pakistan and subsequently handed them over to US authorities stationed in Afghanistan. This questioning of detainees commenced at locations such as the Qali Jangi fort, in northern Afghanistan. Furthermore, detainees began to arrive at a newly established US base near Kandahar, in southern Afghanistan, in November 2001, followed by the Bagram air base outside Kabul in December 2001. Not long after, media reports began to surface, raising concerns about the mistreatment of detainees at Qali Jangi and the Kandahar base. The report continues to document allegations of detainee abuse by US personnel in Afghanistan in 2002 (See, for example, the Letter from the Amnesty International to then-Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, sent on January 7, 2002, at: <https://l1nq.com/nQAQx>). Additionally, the HRW 2011 report shows that official US Army documents released in 2004 and 2005 revealed that in August 2002, four Special Forces personnel were implicated in the murder of an Afghan detainee in their custody. In September 2002, an unidentified detainee reportedly died while in CIA custody near Kabul, allegedly due to hypothermia. In December 2002, two detainees at Bagram air base were fatally beaten by US military guards who were assigned to "collaborate with military intelligence personnel during interrogations". The examples go on. Additionally, a 2004 Department of Defense report, by former Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger, acknowledged that "aggressive" interrogations were conducted in Afghanistan from late 2001 through 2002, exceeding the bounds set in the "US army field manual on interrogation." The HRW report also raises concerns about the existence of "black sites," that is, secret detention facilities for interrogation or transfer, established by the USA *elsewhere*. While the exact locations of these sites have never been officially disclosed by the United States, HRW highlights that substantial evidence suggests that some of them were established in Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Lithuania, Morocco, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, and Thailand (2011, p. 20).

where 780 individuals[167], all of them Muslim, from over 45 countries, have experienced intermittently the grim realities of torture, indefinite and arbitrary detention, and the denial of fair trials (Maran, 2006) over the last 23 years (Adayfi, 2023). However, Guantánamo Bay's relations with the USA go as far back as the "Spanish-American War" in 1898[168], as it is the oldest American military base located beyond the continental USA (Maran, 2006)[169]. Since 2002, this place, often referred to as Gitmo, has served as a detention center, with seven camps, for individuals classified as "terrorists" or as "enemy combatants" (Maran, 2006; Haddad, 2022).

Guantánamo continues to operate to this day, spanning over two decades (Reuters, 2023). In an unsettling revelation from 2019, Rosenberg (2019) shows how this facility was deemed the most financially burdensome prison globally, with an astonishing annual cost of approximately US$13 million per detainee. At the time of Rosenberg's publication, 40 detainees were still held at Gitmo. As of September 2023 the number stands at 30 detainees[170] – 750 have been transferred

[167] Some of the detainees under military custody were minors at the time of their initial capture, that is, they were not 18 years old yet (Maran, 2006). Nonetheless, they were placed with adult detainees, in violation of international laws and standards, such as the "Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989," for article 37 of that Convention establishes that: "(a) No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without possibility of release shall be imposed for offences committed by persons below eighteen years of age; (b) No child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time; (c) [...] In particular, every child deprived of liberty shall be separated from adults unless it is considered in the child's best interest not to do so and shall have the right to maintain contact with his or her family through correspondence and visits, save in exceptional circumstances [...]" (1989, n.p.)

[168] Following the conclusion of this conflict, the United States assumed control over certain territories, including Cuba and Puerto Rico. While Cuba attained its independence in 1903, it was mandated, in accordance with the terms outlined in the Platt Amendment, to "sell or lease to the United States lands necessary for coaling or naval stations at certain specified points to be agreed upon with the President of the United States." (1903, Article VII, n.p.). This way, under this amendment, and despite dissatisfactions expressed over the years, Cuba ceded full jurisdiction and control to the United States through an enduring lease arrangement that could only be terminated by mutual consent (Rothman, 2015). To read the complete amendment, visit this link: <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/platt-amendment>.

[169] According to Maran (2006, p. 152), "In the last quarter of the 20th century, the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base was used to house Cuban and Haitian refugees intercepted on the high seas. In the early 1990s, it held refugees who fled Haiti after military forces overthrew democratically elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The last Haitian migrants departed Guantánamo on November 1, 1995."

[170] According to the New York Times (2023), as of September 2023, "of those 30, 11 have been charged with war crimes in the military commissions system — 10 are awaiting trial and one [from Yemen] has been convicted [in 2008]. In addition, three detainees [from Palestine, Afghanistan and Libya] are held in indefinite law-of-war detention and are neither facing tribunal charges nor being recommended for release. And 16 are held in law-of-war detention but have been recommended for

elsewhere[171] (The New York Times, 2023). Additionally, according to Manoukian (2021) and The New York Times archive *The Guantánamo Docket* (2023), in the last 23 years, at least nine detainees have lost their lives while in military custody at Gitmo.

Among these nine deceased detainees, Abdul Razzaq Hekmati (Afghan, arrived in 2003, died in 2007) and Awal Gul (Afghan, 2002-2011) were reported to have passed away due to natural causes[172]. The remaining seven, Yasser Talal Al Zahrani (Saudi Arabian, 2002-2006); Mani Shaman Al-Utaybi (Saudi Arabian, 2002-2006); Ali Abdullah Ahmed (Yemeni, 2002-2006); Abdul Rahman Ma'ath Thafir Al Amri (Saudi Arabian, 2002-2007); Mohammad Ahmed Abdullah Saleh Al Hanashi (Yemeni, 2002-2009); Adnan Farhan Abdul Latif (Yemeni, 2002-2012); and Hajji Nassim (Afghan, 2007-2011), reportedly died by suicide[173]. Also, 31 detainees[174] are reported to have died after being transferred from Guantánamo to another country. It is important, however, to highlight that all seven deaths that took place in Guantánamo are reported as "apparent suicide," and/or "unknown circumstances of death." Additionally, Adnan Latif, one of these seven detainees, was diagnosed with acute pneumonia, while the others were reportedly found "unresponsive and not breathing" (The New York Times, 2023).

In his memoir *Guantánamo Diaries*, Mohammed Ould Slahi (2015), a Mauritanian detained in Guantánamo from 2002 to 2016, vividly describes the sudden and coercive manner in which he was taken from his home country and placed in U.S. custody. His daily life as a detainee was characterized by a relentless series of aggressive interrogations, featuring tactics such as water deprivation, sleep deprivation, and constant anxiety and pain. In this manner, as suggested by Slahi (2015) and endorsed by human rights organizations reports (IRC, 2004; Human

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transfer with security arrangements to another country," those being: Yemen, Tunisia, Libya, Somalia, Kenya, and Stateless Rohingya (2023, n.p.).

[171] According to the New York Times (2023, n.p.), "The Bush administration transferred about 540, mostly to the custody of their home countries. The Obama administration arranged for the repatriation or resettlement of about 200 men in nations around the world. The Trump administration transferred one man to a prison in Saudi Arabia, and the Biden administration has repatriated five and freed one, reducing the total inmate population to 30 men today." Curiously, these numbers only account for 777 inmates, not 780.

[172] The Guantánamo Docket (2023) reports that only after Abdul Razzaq Hekmati's death, an autopsy determined he had cancer. Awal Gul's cause of death, on the other hand, is reported as an "apparent heart attack".

[173] All nine are counted among the 750 who have been repatriated.

[174] Their names, nationalities and apparent causes of death can be seen at: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/us/guantanamo-bay-detainees.html>.

Rights Watch, 2011, 2022; Amnesty International, 2023), we can shift our attention to the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" as providers of harsh living conditions endured by detainees at Guantánamo. These circumstances were exacerbated by unlawful, "extraordinary renditions" (Vedaschi and Graziani, 2023) and brutal torture (Amnesty International, 2002, 2022; IRC, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2011, 2022; Slahi, 2015), which also may be considered as contributing factors leading to the deaths of detainees.

Likewise, Abu Ghraib, a prison situated approximately 20 miles (or 31 kilometers) west of Baghdad, Iraq, gained notoriety for its harrowing history of torture during Saddam Hussein's rule (1970-2003)[175]. However, the facility became globally (in)famous in 2004, when a scandal unveiled shocking images of sadistic abuses carried out by the US-led coalition personnel[176]. Originally constructed by the British in the 1960s, Abu Ghraib represented a substantial and self-contained complex, akin to a city within a city. It functioned under the administration of the Iraqi government during Saddam Hussein's regime, then was operated by the United States from 2004 to 2006, and subsequently returned to Iraqi government

[175] According to Global Security (n.d., n.p.), "as many as 4000 prisoners were executed at Abu Ghraib Prison in 1984 [and] at least 122 male prisoners were executed at Abu Ghraib prison in February/ March 2000." Also, by 2001 it is believed that Abu Ghraib housed up to 15,000 individuals, a significant portion of whom were subjected to acts of torture. Among the detainees, there were hundreds of Fayli (*Shi'a*) Kurds and other individuals of Iranian descent who had mysteriously vanished previously, during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988). These individuals were reportedly held incommunicado at Abu Ghraib prison, enduring close to two decades of detention without any formal charges in exceedingly harsh conditions. More shocking is a distressing revelation that emerged regarding these detainees: many of them had become unwitting subjects in that country's programs involving experimental chemical and biological weapons. In 2002, Saddam Hussein was reelected as President of Iraq. The referendum of October 2002 declared that, unopposed, Hussein had obtained 100% of the votes (Gourevitch and Morris, 2008). In an unprecedented move, he declared a complete, definitive amnesty as a token of appreciation to the Iraqi people (Global Security, n.d.), or as provocative gesture against the USA who was menacing to take over "his" country (Gourevitch and Morris, 2008). This amnesty extended to all Iraqis detained for various reasons. However, individuals sentenced to death for murder would only be released upon the consent of the victims' families. The Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), Iraq's supreme authority, issued a parallel amnesty encompassing all prisoners within the nation. When Saddam announced the amnesty, a gathering outside the Abu Ghraib prison commenced, appearing as a traditional anti-American rally. The crowd lauded Saddam Hussein, chanting his praises and vociferously crying out "Down Bush!" In the aftermath, reports indicated that Abu Ghraib prison seemed deserted. However, numerous inmates remained unaccounted for, especially those convicted of espionage for the United States and the so-called "Zionist entity," although precise figures were unavailable. Additionally, though several press accounts hinted at the existence of mass graves within or near the prison's vicinity, imagery alone did not confirm this claim (Global Security, n.d.; Gourevitch and Morris, 2008).

[176] In 2004, *The Associated Press* disclosed that it had obtained copies of statements provided to Army investigators. These statements revealed that the involvement in torture practices extended beyond U.S. soldiers to include troops from Poland and various other nations belonging to the U.S.-led coalition (Oliver, 2004; NBC 2004).

control from 2009 to 2014 (Global Security, n.d.; Tawfeeq, 2009; Adnan and Arango, 2014).

The removal of Saddam Hussein from power, in 2003, led the United States and its allies to take control of the Abu Ghraib detention center. In 2003, the prison complex underwent a reconfiguration of its five sections to accommodate detainees (Gourevitch and Morris, 2008). The U.S.-led occupation maintained a presence at the Abu Ghraib Prison until 2006. During this period, and in the context of "*Operation Enduring Freedom*," the facility was employed for the purpose of interrogating and torturing detainees. These distressing practices came to global attention when images were broadcast on the CBS News television program, "60 Minutes II," on April 28, 2004 (Hansen, 2015). Subsequently, on April 30, Seymour Hersh (2004a) published an article in The New Yorker titled *Torture at Abu Ghraib*. The article asserted that

> Most of the prisoners […] – by the fall there were several thousand, including women and teenagers – were civilians, many of whom had been picked up in random military sweeps and at highway checkpoints. They fell into three loosely defined categories: common criminals; security detainees suspected of "crimes against the coalition"; and a small number of suspected "high value" leaders of the insurgency against the coalition forces (Hersh, 2004a, n.p.).

Moreover, the International Red Cross (IRC, 2004, p. 8) estimated that between 70% and 90% detainees were arrested by mistake, meaning they had not been subjected to legal proceedings or had been arrested under questionable circumstances. Afterwards, the dissemination of disturbing photographs[177] depicting the maltreatment by the invading military forces – ostensibly in the name of pacification and the suppression of crimes attributed to Saddam Hussein's rule – further intensified the reactions to these revelations.

Confronted with the extensive controversies surrounding Abu Ghraib Prison and the mounting international pressure, the United States announced its closure in

[177] I chose not to include the images in this dissertation due to their deeply disturbing and potentially malaise-inducing nature. Nevertheless, should the reader wish to view them, they can do so by visiting the provided link. Again, I recommend caution, for this link contains photographs that may be triggering: <https://www.theguardian.com/gall/0,8542,1211872,00.html>. The reader may also see images regarding the Guantánamo bay detention center at: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/06/12/us/guantanamo-bay-pentagon-photos.html>. These last images, contrary to those of Abu Ghraib, possess a more "official" character, for they were released by the U.S. Pentagon. Therefore, they are not as disturbing –at least not as crudely and painfully disturbing – as the former.

2006. However, despite international appeals for the demolition of the prison complex – or at least its definitive closure –, it was ultimately reopened from 2009 to 2014, under a new designation, the Central Prison of Baghdad (Global Security, n.d.). As Perezalonzo (2010, p. 210) underscores, the recent history of Abu Ghraib is deeply unsettling due to its vividly graphic nature, serving as a poignant illustration of human suffering inflicted in the name of sovereign state authority.

The exorbitant expenses associated with "Wars on Terrors" not only weighed heavily on American taxpayers – the United States, for instance, has expended, as of 2021, over US$ 8 trillion in the past two decades on operations against "terrorism" (Kimball, 2021) – but also underscore at least 900,000 deaths, and the rampant violations of the rights of individuals suspected of "terrorism" – as well as of those close to them – within Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib, other undisclosed prisons in Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, and various "black sites." (Kimball, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2022; UNHR-OHC, 2022; Amnesty International, 2023).

In Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib, more specifically, detainees were submit/ted to methods labeled as "improved interrogation techniques," which, within the bounds of international law, qualify as torture – as per the definitions outlined in *The United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* of 1984; and *The Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War* of 1949.

The United States, as a signatory to the Convention Against Torture (1984), is bound by its provisions, particularly Article 2, Sections 2 and 3, which state that "2. No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture. 3. An order from a superior officer or a public authority may not be invoked as a justification of torture." Additionally, the USA is also bound by the Third Geneva Convention of 1949 provisions, wherein Part I, Article 3, stipulates that

> the following acts are and shall remain prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever with respect to the above-mentioned persons: a) violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture; b) taking of hostages; c) outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment; d) the passing of sentences and the

> carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples (p. 92).

In turn, Part III, Article 17, establishes that "no physical or mental torture, nor any other form of coercion, may be inflicted on prisoners of war to secure from them information of any kind whatever. Prisoners of war who refuse to answer may not be threatened, insulted, or exposed to any unpleasant or disadvantageous treatment of any kind." (p. 98). Additionally, in Chapter III, Article 87 prohibits "collective punishment for individual acts, corporal punishment, imprisonment in premises without daylight and, in general, any form of torture or cruelty, are forbidden." (p. 125).

Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Justice's *Crime Resource Manual*, Chapter 20, titled *Torture (18 U.S.C. 2340A)*, also provides information on this matter:

> Section 2340A of Title 18, United States Code, prohibits torture committed by public officials under color of law against persons within the public official's custody or control. Torture is defined to include acts specifically intended to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering. (It does not include such pain or suffering incidental to lawful sanctions.) The statute applies only to acts of torture committed outside the United States. There is Federal extraterritorial jurisdiction over such acts whenever the perpetrator is a national of the United States or the alleged offender is found within the United States, irrespective of the nationality of the victim or the alleged offender (2020, n.p.).

However, as it is possible to observe, being bound by these conventions and its own "Crime Resource Manual" does not result in a clear-cut scenario. Rather, there is an intricate scenario, which is illustrated, for example, by a 2002 document titled *Situation of Guantánamo detainees*,[178] which has been authored in accordance with the parameters set forth by the United Nations. The report highlighted that the Bush administration's treatment of "terrorists" did not fully adhere to the provisions of the Third Geneva Convention (1949). Specifically, the Convention's directives were not being entirely applied to the incarcerated members of the Taliban and *al-*

[178] It is a "report of the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Leila Zerrougui; the Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, Leandro Despouy; the Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Manfred Nowak; the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Asma Jahangir; and the Special Rapporteur on the Right of Everyone to the Enjoyment of the Highest Attainable Standard of Physical and Mental Health, Paul Hunt." (United Nations Digital Library, 2006).

Qaeda in Guantánamo (Zerrougui et al., 2006). Nonetheless, although raising concerns about the U.S. efforts to reinterpret "torture" within the context of a "war on terror" – which alarmingly conflicted with the Geneva Conventions and with the Convention Against Torture – the document primarily served as an analytical and advisory resource for the USA, rather than a legally binding directive. As a result, its recommendations remain unheeded to this day.

Still, the astonishment surrounding the situation in Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo is indeed noteworthy (IRC, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2011, 2022; UNHR-OHC, 2022; Amnesty International, 2023; Hersh, 2004a, 2004b). Equally significant is the scrutiny the USA has faced in the context of international law since then. However, it is worth noting that, in dealing with individuals classified as "terrorists," the USA managed to navigate legal gray areas, particularly since the Bush administration.

Scahill (2011), who conducted interviews with CIA officers and former government officials from various U.S. departments, highlights that resolutions and measures were adopted to empower the CIA to apprehend and detain not only militants but also individuals suspected of involvement in "terrorist acts" worldwide. This is a direct outcome of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors," which bestowed upon the country the power to dictate, selectively, some "human rights" while omitting those that posed obstacles to the pursuit of its objectives.

According to the Bridge Initiative Team (2020, n.p.), the ambiguous legal standing of Guantánamo Bay, which is leased by the USA but situated in Cuba, played a pivotal role in its selection as a detention facility. This unique situation provided the U.S. government the opportunity to contend that detainees held at Guantánamo were not entitled to specific rights protected under "American law." Moreover, the ambiguity surrounding Guantanamo's status, encompassing both territorial jurisdiction and detainment conditions, led to the classification of suspected members of the Taliban and *Al-Qaeda* – i.e., "terrorists" – as ineligible for recognition as Prisoners of War (POWs). As established in the *Memorandum for Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, on January 19, 2002, then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld transmitted that "[...] The United States has determined that Al Qaida and Taliban individuals under the control of the Department of Defense are not entitled to prisoner of war status for purposes of the Geneva Conventions of 1949" (p. 1).

Consequently, the legal status of detainees extended beyond the suspension of merely "American law" to encompass "international humanitarian law," including the Geneva Conventions, which supposedly did not apply to these detainees. This way, rather than POW, they were designated as "enemy combatants" (Maran, 2006). Hence, in deviating from the established provisions of the Third Geneva Convention, we can observe a scenario that allowed for only one convicted detainee[179], out of 780! in Guantánamo (Greenberg and Dratel, 2005; Yamato, 2011[180]). These ambiguities similarly extend to the context of Abu Ghraib and the so-called "black sites" (Gourevitch and Morris, 2008; Scahill, 2011).

Moreover, in the endeavor to navigate legal ambiguities, there have been observable efforts aimed at instituting an "exceptional security order." This entails a scenario in which the usual norms and procedures are temporarily suspended to facilitate the investigation, incarceration, and mistreatment of individuals identified as "terrorists." A realm marked by uncertainty, and blurred boundaries… a realm at the crossroads of the legal and the political (Agamben, 2004).

These efforts have been manifested through a range of legislative and executive instruments, including the *War Powers Resolution* (1973), the *Authorization for the Use of Military Force* (2001), the U.S. PATRIOT Act (2001), National Security Strategies (spanning from 2002 to 2022) – see Chapter 2 –, memoranda concerning the legal status of detainees (see Bybee, 2005; Yoo and Delabunty, 2005; Yamato, 2011), and the issuance of Executive Orders and Proclamations, such as the *Declaration of National Emergency by Reason of Certain Terrorist Attacks* (2001), the *Presidential Executive Order on Protecting*

[179] Ali Hamza Ahmad Suliman al-Bahlul, a Yemeni, was sent to the USA, faced trial and is currently serving a life sentence in Kentucky, at a federal prison. According to The Guantánamo Docket, "Mr. Bahlul, a citizen of Yemen, is serving a life sentence imposed by the Guantánamo military commissions system. He was captured by Pakistani forces near the border with Afghanistan in December 2001 and was among the first batch of detainees brought to Guantánamo on the day the prison opened the following month. Accused of being a propaganda chief for Al Qaeda and a media secretary for Osama bin Laden, he refused to participate in his 2008 military trial and mostly sat mute beside an Air Force lawyer who was assigned to defend him. A panel of U.S. military officers convicted him of three terrorism-related charges on Nov. 3, 2008. Two of the convictions were subsequently overturned for technical reasons. For example, an appeals court ruled that 'providing material support for terrorism,' one of his charges, was not a recognized war crime and so could not be brought before a military tribunal." (New York Times, 2023, n.p.).

[180] For comprehensive analyses of the strategies employed by the United States in navigating legal ambiguities, refer to: Yamato, Roberto Vilchez. 2011. Rastreando o Fora-Da-Lei da Humanidade: um estudo sobre a Política Internacional de Banimento a partir de Memorandos Norte-Americanos da Guerra Contra o Terror. Doctoral Dissertation. Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio); and Greenberg, Karen J.; Dratel, Joshua L. 2005. The Torture Papers: The Road to Abu Ghraib. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

America Through Lawful Detention of Terrorists (2018) and the *National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism* (2021), among others.

These actions, underscored the U.S. government, having the Presidential executive power as Commander-in-Chief (US Code, title 50, chapter 33 War Powers Resolution, n.p.), would act in a commitment to upholding the principles of "democracy, peace, and freedom." Consequently, the task of countering "terrorism" and "terrorists" was portrayed as an "urgent" and "exceptional" imperative:

> […] Whereas such acts continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States; and
> Whereas the President has authority under the Constitution to take action to deter and prevent acts of international terrorism against the United States:
> Now, therefore, be it
> […] AUTHORIZATION FOR USE OF UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES. (a) IN GENERAL.—That the President is authorized to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons. […] (2) […]Nothing in this resolution supersedes any requirement of the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 107-40, 2001, p. 224-225).

In the same "urgent, exceptional, imperative" vein, the PATRIOT Act, formally known as *Public Law 107–56, 2001*, was designed to combat and penalize "terrorist" activities within the United States and globally. Its overarching objectives encompass not only deterring "terrorism" but also empowering law enforcement with additional investigatory tools and addressing a range of other objectives, as detailed in "enhancing domestic security against terrorism" (p. 276-278). In pursuit of these objectives, the PATRIOT Act introduces various strategies and provisions, which include the promotion of "enhanced surveillance procedures" (p. 278-296), the removal of barriers hindering "terrorism" investigations (p. 363-368), the establishment of authority to intercept wire, oral, and electronic communications related to "terrorism" (p. 278), the DNA identification of "terrorists" and violent offenders (p. 364), fostering coordination with law enforcement agencies (p. 364-365), extending the jurisdiction of the Secret Service (p. 366-367), and facilitating the disclosure of educational records (p. 367-368), among others.

The PATRIOT Act was later replaced by the USA FREEDOM Act of 2015. However, this document does not represent a radical change in the way the USA surveilled its population in the name of combatting "terrorism." We could talk, though, about an inflection, that, on the one hand, establishes limits on use of "unlawfully obtained information" (p. 278), but that, on the other hand, proposes "Enhanced National Security Provisions" (p. 298-300) regarding "emergencies involving non-United States persons" (p. 298-299), the "improvement to investigations of international proliferation of weapons of mass destruction" (p. 300), the "increase in penalties for material support of foreign terrorist organizations" (p. 300), the "prevention of nuclear terrorism" (p. 309-313), and so forth.

Similarly, *Proclamation 7463*, issued by then-President George Bush on September 14, 2001, titled *Declaration of National Emergency by Reason of Certain Terrorist Attacks* (Federal Register, 2001), serves as another illustrative case. It is essential to note that this proclamation initially required annual renewal, and that these renewals have persisted consistently up to now. For instance, on August 30, 2016, then-President Barack Obama signed a letter affirming the continuation of the "National Emergency" due to ongoing "terrorist threats" (The White House, 2016, n.p.). Similarly, on September 12, 2019, then-President Donald Trump also conveyed to the U.S. Congress that the "threat of terrorism that led to the declaration of a national emergency on September 14, 2001, continues" (The White House Archives, 2019). Most recently, on September 07, 2023, President Joe Biden renewed the "national emergency" by emphasizing that "the terrorist threat persists, necessitating the continuation of the national emergency declared on September 14, 2001, along with the associated powers and authorities beyond September 14, 2023" (The White House, 2023, n.p.).

In these *textiles* of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors," we can discern the persistent (non)presence of "terrorism" as it *officially* haunts the nation. There is an enduring *différance*, an asymmetric counterconceptual iterable structure – that of a "terrorist threat" wherein its specter engenders a climate where "national emergencies" are invoked, thereby enabling the perpetuation of extraordinary-patriotic-freedom-loving-authorizations. This way, in their *intertextual* attempts to address "terrorism" and "terrorists," these official declarations consistently emphasized the United States' substantial capacity, determination, and military power.

Supposedly a temporary – as in "lasting or intended to last or be used only for a short time; not permanent" (Oxford Dictionary, 2023) – and exceptional – as in "a thing that does not follow a rule" (Oxford Dictionary, 2023) – "states of national emergency" have been going on for over 22 years. Consequently, the discourses surrounding the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" have granted that country the authority to determine what "exception" and "temporary" mean, which humanitarian laws were preferable, as well as the authority to blur the boundaries of privacy, and simultaneously establish those who fall outside the purview of the law, essentially rendering them outsiders (Yamato, 2019).

Following Agamben (2004, p. 1), it is important to consider that, when we discuss exceptional measures – which arise during times of political crises and are, therefore, a matter of the political rather than of juridical-constitutional realm – we should bear in mind they can only exist in a paradoxical fashion. Meaning that "exceptional, urgent measures" represent juridical measures that *defy* legal categorization, while the "state of exception" manifests as the legal embodiment of that which eludes conventional legal categorization. Or, as Joan Fitzpatrick (2003, p. 205) puts it, regarding indefinite arbitrary detentions, the "standards of treatment are determined by discretionary executive policy, not by legal norms [for] the selection of internees is determined by a pure exercise of administrative discretion, without announced criteria or process, and without judicial oversight." This way, the "exceptional" context of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors," characterized by the blurred demarcation "between" the legal and the political paved the way for indefinite detentions both at Abu Ghraib and at Guantánamo… and elsewhere.

At the crux of Abu Ghraib, Guantánamo and many other (un)known detentions' situation lay the complex issue of applying, or often not applying, the principles delineated in the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the Convention Against Torture to individuals who are – or might never have been – affiliated with *Al-Qaeda* and the Taliban. Beyond legal dimensions, the aforementioned cases implicate detainees' own humanity, dignity, and worth. Consequently, the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" at both Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib remain a problem, notwithstanding the closure of the latter and the extensive scrutiny in numerous

articles, books, documentaries and films[181]. The ongoing challenge is emphasized by the enduring practices that have deeply impacted the lives of detainees who have undergone or continue to face detention. Meaning those who have been released have not forgotten what happened to them (Slahi, 2015; Hilal, 2017; Javaid, 2023). Consequently, this persistence raises fundamental queries, including those concerning the mechanisms supporting Guantanamo's persistence and the "rationale" of its existence.

As previously elucidated, the *textiles* of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" were not exclusive to the Bush administration. When President Barack Obama took office in January 2009, he inherited the enduring legacy of Gitmo from his predecessor, complete with the burden of a deeply tarnished reputation stemming from the scandals of detainees' torture and humiliation. Also, it is crucial to underscore that although the initial campaign promises and the early days of the Obama administration appeared to be filled with a commitment to shutter Guantánamo within a year, as documented in the Executive Order 13492 of 2009 *Review and Disposition of Individuals Detained at the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base and Closure of Detention Facilities* [182], the actual extent of this commitment remained subject to doubt, as the detention center still stood, fully operational, and the haunting memories of the past practices within its walls remained strikingly vivid as his second term came to an end eight years later.

Besides casting a negative stain on President Obama's legacy, this situation also created an opportunity for his successor's administration, that of Donald Trump (2017-2021), to engage in excesses akin to those seen during the last administrations. As I previously mentioned, when questioned about the potential use of waterboarding techniques, Trump declared, "Would I approve waterboarding? You bet your ass I would. In a heartbeat. I would approve more than that. It works [...] and if it doesn't work, they deserve it anyway for what they do to us" (Trump apud The Guardian, 2016, n.p.). In his 2018 "State of the Union Address," President Trump emphasized his decision to issue an Executive Order

[181] Documentaries: Ghosts of Abu Ghraib (2007), Standard Operating Procedure (2008), Released from Guantánamo (2023). Movie: The Mauritanian (2021). Books: Fakoff, Marc. 2007. Poems from Guantánamo: The Detainees Speak. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press; Gourevitch, Philip; Morris, Errol. 2008. Standard Operating Procedure. UK: Picador.

[182] The Executive Order 13492 of 2009, issued by President Barack Obama, established that "the detention facilities at Guantánamo for individuals covered by this order shall be closed as soon as practicable, and no later than 1 year from the date of this order." (p. 2).

instructing James Mattis, then-Secretary of Defense, to review the U.S. military detention policies and maintain the operation of Guantánamo Bay. He also appealed to Congress to secure the necessary authority to detain "terrorists" in the pursuit of ISIS and *al-Qaeda*, regardless of their geographic location. This way, through Executive Order 13823 *Protecting America Through Lawful Detention of Terrorists* it was asserted that the operations at Guantánamo Bay were "lawful, secure, humane," and in accordance with both "USA and international legal standards." Executive Order 13823 also fully revoked aforementioned Executive Order 13492 from 2009, in which then-President Obama had initiated a review of the status of individuals held at Guantánamo and had pledged to close its facilities.

In 2023, the collective voice of at least 160 international rights organizations joined together in a resounding letter to President Joe Biden, urging the closure of Guantánamo Bay. Their plead resonates strongly because this detention facility not only continues to inflict lasting harm on those held within its confines, but to affect their families and communities as well (Ali Harb, 2023). This plead also highlights that the "Guantánamo model" has been replicated by the USA and its allies elsewhere – in Bagram and in Abu Ghraib, as well as in prisons in Syria, Egypt, Nigeria and so forth. In these places, also, thousands of individuals were/are held in harsh conditions under the banner of alleged "terrorism-related activities" (Human Rights Watch, 2022). More than that, these detainees encompass a diverse range of individuals, including civil society members, the relatives of suspects of "terrorism," and even children who have been victims of armed groups, all too frequently held without the benefit of formal charges or a fair trial (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

Indeed, there is a myriad of allegations of violence being perpetrated against detainees in the name of inter/national security (Fitzpatrick, 2003; IRC, 2004; Maran, 2006; Amnesty International, 2006; Human Rights Watch, 2001, 2022; Hansen, 2015; Gourevitch and Morris, 2008; Butler, 2016; Hersh, 2004, and so forth). There is no lack of examples to illustrate this scenario. Slahi (2015) says that he tried countless times to contact his family "[…] but to no avail, and then I washed my hands of the evils and I prayed to God to take care of my family and make them know where I was." (2004, p. 179).

Perhaps one of the most emblematic images of Abu Ghraib's abhorrence is "man in the hood." This photograph shows a hooded detainee standing on a

cardboard box, "in his poncho cape, barefoot atop his box, arms outstretched, wires trailing from his finger" (Gourevitch and Morris, 2008, p. 147). This man was told he would be electrocuted were his arms to move down According to Sabrina Harman, a former American soldier stationed in Iraq[183],

> "I told him that. I told him not to fall off, that he would be electrocuted if he did. […] I knew he wouldn't be electrocuted," she said. "So it really didn't bother me. I mean, it was just words. There was really no action in it. It would have been meaner if there really was electricity coming out, and he really could be electrocuted. No physical harm was ever done to him." In fact, she said, "He was laughing at us towards the end of the night, maybe because he knew we couldn't break him." (Harman, apud Gourevitch and Morris, 2008, p. 147).

However, the man who claims[184] to be the "man in the hood," Ali Shallal al-Qaysi, tells a different story. In an interview to Osama bin Javaid (2023), al-Qaysi warns his interviewer: "some details are too gruesome and painful to recount" (2023, n.p.). He was detained at Abu Ghraib from 2003 to 2004 and, with regard to the aforementioned torture, he says "I was standing on the box. It is so strong, not breakable. They tied wires and started electrical shocks. I remember biting my tongue, my eyes felt they were about to pop out. I started bleeding from under the mask and I fell down" (2023, n.p.). Moreover, his hand lose complete function because of this torture.

Guantánamo's and Abu Ghraib's procedures also encompassed force-feeding, a distressing and perilous process involving the insertion of a plastic tube into the detainee's nose, compelling them to ingest a nutritional substance against their will. This practice is widely recognized as an excruciating, cruel, and degrading treatment (Gourevitch and Morris; Wilcox, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2019).

Additionally, in both Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib the imposition of sexual constraints became a routine. Through torture, the detainee's bodies were constantly subjected to the construction of a weak and suppressed "sexual identity,"

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[183] According to Gourevitch and Morris (2008, p. 64), "SPECIALIST SABRINA HARMAN of the 372nd Military Police company, a United States Army Reserves unit out of Cresaptown, Maryland, arrived at Abu Ghraib on October 1, 2003."

[184] According to Javaid (2003, n.p.), "without prison records, we cannot verify he is the man under the hood. But with testimony from two decades ago, his deformed hand that earned him the nickname 'the claw,' his photos, court cases, and interviews with former prison officials and lawyers, it is clear Ali was among the victims at Abu Ghraib."

which forcibly and continuously instilled a sense of "Muslim deviant sexuality" (Owens, 2010; Gourevitch and Morris, 2008). Leaving them naked in front of women (both women detainees and women soldiers); being obliged to pose naked in a human pyramid; making them masturbate each other or over each other bodies; making detainees masturbate in front of female soldiers; forcing them to wear "women's" underwear; holding them with a leash (like dogs); making them touch women's (soldiers) bodies; as well as the (threat of or the actual) rape of detainees are some examples of what took place at these detention centers (Amnesty International, 2006; Gourevitch and Morris, 2008; Javaid, 2023; Slahi, 2015).

Ali Shallal al-Qaysi also asserts the military were sadistic:

> Women were put on the sector to our left on the second floor. We heard their cries. The guards used to get a male detainee to serve them food but on one condition, he should serve them food while he is fully naked. We were all kept naked by the way. We used to hear their screams, there was a guy called Fredrik who used to harm them […] We could not help them, we could not do anything for them. Some of us were banging our heads against the wall, we do not want this to happen again and again. Occupation is the worst shape of terrorism, crushes the dignity of people and destroys countries. It was not easy to hear these women cry. They did nothing, they were brought as hostages. When [the Americans] carry out a raid against a former regime official or a nuclear scientist and fail to detain the wanted man, they brought women as hostages […] We heard them crying and screaming what they have been going through. I have witnessed a horrible scene – a man had his wife raped before his eyes […] What kind of human being can do such things? To force people to be naked, sexually humiliated, inserting broken wood sticks in sensitive parts until they bleed, electric shock to genitals[...] (al-Qaysi, apud Javaid, 2023, n.p.)

> They then took off all our clothes, made us stand next to the wall and carried out immoral acts that I cannot even talk about […] women soldiers took pictures of naked men and did not care (Hashim Muhsin apud Al Jazeera, 2004, n.p.).

According to Javaid (2023), al-Qaysi and countless former detainees from Abu Ghraib still wait for "justice" and maybe they will not see "it" in their lifetime. In this manner, markers of sexuality and civilization were disturbingly weaponized as tools for tormenting "Muslim," and/or "Arab," and/or "Middle Eastern" detainees (Owens, 2010). Drawing from the terminologies employed by Butler and Spivak, these individuals bodies and very own existence were rendered as "spectral humans, deprived of ontico-ontological weight and failing the tests of social intelligibility required for minimal recognition" (2018, p. 25).

It is evident that the effectiveness of methods used against "terrorists" was not a primary concern in these "Wars on Terrors." Proof of guilt held little significance as individuals' lives and bodies were rendered unrecognizable – reduced to bare, precarious existence (Agamben, 1998; Butler, 2019). These policies, established and maintained over the past 23 years in the USA, suggest a dehumanization of those labeled as "terrorists." Instead of seeing a fellow human being, they were often viewed as mere object-individuals – or even an *abject* –, punished in response to perceived threats against "American" and "global" ideals of freedom, democracy, justice, and humanity.

Most detainees – even those released as no proof of guilt was found –as well as their families, never received any reparation or apologies for injuries, property damage or deaths (Javaid, 2023). Furthermore, only lower-level personnel involved in the Abu Ghraib scandal received sentences which are considered negligible (Amnesty International, 2006; Hansen, 2015). High-level personnel, like Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense of the USA (1975-1977; 2001-2006), and Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense (2001-2005), received no sentence whatsoever.

As Gourevitch and Morris (2008) remind us, there was a list of "counter-resistance techniques in the War on Terrorism" approved and signed by Donald Rumsfeld in 2003. The *Memorandum for the Commander, US Southern Command* established that "[t]hese techniques must be [...] limited to interrogations of unlawful combatants held at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba" (p. 1) and included "playing on the love a detainee has for an individual group;" "playing on the hatred a detainee has for an individual group;" "significantly increasing the fear level in a detainee" (p. 2); "removing the detainee from the standard interrogation setting and placing him in a setting that may be less comfortable" (p. 3); and "reversing sleep cycles from night to day" (p. 4). Even though it was first used as a guide to interrogations at Gitmo, later, Geoffrey Miller, a former U.S. general who commanded Guantánamo Bay, provided General Sanchez, then-Commander of Coalition Ground Forces in Iraq, a copy of this list to be used in Abu Ghraib, which also included "counter-resistance techniques" such as: isolation of detainees for more than 30 days; removal of clothing; endless interrogations; forced shaving; the use of physical contact; and the use of dogs to induce stress and phobia (Gourevitch and Morris, 2008, p. 49).

This way, instead of a focus on accountability, the disclosure of what happening at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo prompted endeavors to manage and mitigate the situation. In an interview in May 2004, President Bush asserted that "this is not America!" (Bush, 2004a, p. 768). Furthermore, in 2009, President Obama prevented the disclosure of over 2,000 additional images depicting detainees' mistreatment, citing concerns that such revelations could only unleash anti-American sentiments and jeopardize the safety of American servicemen (Hansen, 2015, p. 26). As he declared, "the publication of these photos would not add any additional benefit to our understanding of what was carried out in the past by a small number of individuals" (Obama, apud Zeleny and Shanker, 2009, n.p.).

Consequently, "enemies" without a defined territory and devoid of a unique identity, "terrorism" and "terrorists," became deliberate targets that the U.S. foreign policy pursued in the name of safeguarding the "free world." This pursuit was persistently reiterated, primarily centered around figures such as the Taliban in Afghanistan and *Al-Qaeda* in Afghanistan and Iraq (Scahill, 2014). In this context, we observe the aforementioned multifaceted battlefront: invasions of Afghanistan (in 2002) and Iraq (in 2003), militarized manhunts, and the manipulation of human life, including torture. It is evident that, within this framework, discourses *grounded on the groundless grounds* of "terrorism" and "terrorist" were perpetuated, leading to their problematic, almost automatic association with "Arabs," "Middle Easterners," and "Muslims" (Abrahamian, 2003). This way, their "essence," if one could ever say such a thing exists, became inextricably linked to "terrorism."

However, despite the recent and extensive usage of these terms, we should bear in mind that "Arab," "Middle Eastern" and "Muslim," much like "terrorism" and "terrorist" are not recent additions to a clearly defined narrative. They were already part of the U.S. agenda prior to the 21st century. The latter terms were already explored in Chapter 2. With regard to the former three terms, Said (2007) exemplifies that, for the United States, the images of "Arabs," "Middle Easterners" and "Muslims" appear strongly as a "threat" during the 1970s. This perception took hold when the Yom Kippur/Ramadan War occurred, in 1973, drawing more attention to the populations of the Middle East, albeit in a negative and fear-laden manner. As per Said (2007), from that point forward, these communities were depicted as disruptors of order, viewed as antagonistic to the values and very existence of "the West." Characteristics such as eccentricity, irrationality, and

destitution gradually became associated with them – and they were taught at military training.

Raphael Patai (1973), for example, claims to offer a comprehensive description of "The Arab Mind," and includes a whole chapter on "Arabs and sex," portraying sexuality as a subject of shame and suppression (Hersh, 2004b). And, as Col. Norvell Atkine, who wrote the "Foreword" of Patai's reprinted book in 2002, highlights, "At the institution where I teach military officers, *The Arab Mind* forms the basis of my cultural instruction, complemented by my own experiences of some twenty-five years living in, studying, or teaching about the Middle East." This way, it is possible to observe, according to Said (2007), that these techniques of re-presentation draw upon established institutions, traditions, conventions, and shared codes of interpretation to generate their influence. In other words, they do not depend exclusively on "a distant and amorphous Orient" (p. 22).

In the same vein, the focus on religion's role and the recurrent association of violence with "Islamic fundamentalism" can be thought of with the help of Edward Said's (2007) central theme: "Orientalist discourses"[185] concerning the "Middle East." This connection arises from the portrayal of Islam and its adherents as a "backward terrorist threat" to "civilization," a perception that led to the geographical delineation of "terror" and the subsequent "Wars on Terrors" that particularly spotlighted countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran, in addition to those somehow linked to the Taliban and *Al-Qaeda*. Consequently, Said's perspective pays attention to how individuals, groups, and nations in the "Arab," "Middle Eastern" and "Muslim" worlds – whose positions deviated from or resisted "Western" subordination – became targets of what I call "Wars on Terrors."

Evidently, likewise "terrorism" and "terrorist," the ideas of an "Eastern world" and an "Western world" lack ontological stability (Said, 2007, p. 15). For they are continuously re-shaped. Consequently, the use of terms such as "West" and "East" imply a potential implication of discussing well-defined entities. Said himself underscores that

[185] It is important to highlight that, as per Said (2007), "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident.'" (p. 2) and that "Orientalism" primarily does not seek a comprehensive, sensitive, and attentive understanding of other cultures, historical periods, and geographical contexts. Instead, it serves as a self-assertive endeavor that, extending beyond symbolic violence, manifests itself in an aggressive belligerent manner.

> I should say again that I have no "real" Orient to argue for. I do, however, have a very high regard for the powers and gifts of the peoples of that region to struggle on for their vision of what they are and want to be. There has been so massive and calculatedly aggressive an attack on the contemporary societies of the Arab and Muslim for their backwardness, lack of democracy, and abrogation of women's rights that we simply forget that such notions as modernity, enlightenment and democracy are by no means simple and agreed upon concepts that one either does or does not find, like Easter eggs in the living-room (2007, p. xiv).

Neither is the "Orient," nor is the "Occident" simply "here" or "there," "this" or "that." In a similar vein, neither are "Arabs," "Middle Easterners" and "Muslims" inherently the "self" or the "other," "here" or "there," "good" or "bad." However, it is possible to underline that this "ontological instability" – hauntology – does not hinder the utilization of emotions, including fear, hatred, and apprehension, in conjunction with the belief in the supremacy of a "Western self" (Said, 2007, p. 68).

I do agree with Said (2007, p. xix) when he says that "the worst aspect of this essentializing stuff is that human suffering in all its density and pain is spirited away […] as in the common, dismissively contemptuous American phrase, 'you're history!'" However, while Said (2007) believes "Eastern traditions and societies" within "Orientalist discourses" are expected to conform to standards of "the Western world" (2007, p. 144), I believe "the West" would never reach out to a "terrorist-easterner-detainee" seeking to rescue "them" from an authoritarian abyss. Rather, these individuals' perpetual asymmetric position does not allow for inclusion, but rather only to radical exclusions. This way, we must understand that, in these dynamics, the notion that "the East" should undergo conversion and instruction (Said, 2007) is not met in cases such as those of Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo, for the detainees, when defined as "terrorists," would never be welcomed into the "Western order," meaning they are neither convertible, nor instructible.

Also, as I already showed in Chapters 2 and 3, there is no absolute, pure presence nor absolute, pure absence. There is only an endless chain of iterability, *différance*, asymmetry, hauntology, supplementarity… "there is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a re-presence, or a representation" (Said, 2003, p. 21). These re-presences of "terrorism," "terrorists," "Arabs," "Middle Easterners" and "Muslims," and their almost automatic linkage fuels a looming sense of "imminent

threat." This way, in the process of vilifying an unfamiliar adversary, for whom the term "terrorist" is applied – i.e., the spatialization and the temporalization of "terrorism" (Bonditti, 2014; Derrida, 1968) – serves the overarching objective of maintaining a state of heightened agitation and resentment, thereby facilitating the justification for, and legitimation of "war."

This section exemplifies how stereotypes, rooted in a presumed sense of "fixity," often coexist with discrimination, pain and radical exclusions (Bhabha, 1998). This occurs because stereotypes, essentializations, and the imposition of a center with no natural site enable the translation of the unfamiliar into terms deemed consistent. Consequently, beyond characterizing the "other" as "different, backward, illiberal, violent, deviant, exotic and intriguing," discourses like those of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" may cast the "other" as an "abject other," deserving only of horror and pain, and unworthy of life. In other words, the "terrorist-other," the "Arab-other," "the Middle Eastern-other," the "Muslim-other," "the unlawful detainee-other," "the enemy combatant-other" – as well as many "others" explored in the next sections – become somehow synonymous with degeneration, eccentricity, excessive religiosity, potential violence and inadmissibility. This way, these *textiles* are not mere offensive names; rather, they find expression in innumerable forms, including "war."

Logocentric discourses consistently seek to assert themselves as the dominant, standardized, pure, and natural "truth." As a result, they pave powerful ways for conceiving asymmetric oppositions, where the "other" is perceived as incidental, intricate, and marginalized, and where the "other" can be electrocuted, attacked by dogs, deprived of food, deprived of their family, violated, indefinitely detained and even killed. This way, through processes of inclusion and exclusion, paradoxically, as Walker (2006a, p. 66) aptly states, "We are all the same, as humanity, but all different, as members of different national cultures: We are the ambivalent people/peoples of the United Nations." Some – like "terrorists" – are not part of this ambivalent peoples though, for dynamics of inclusion and exclusion allow for the development of "a history" that encompasses the universal and the particular, but also the deviant; rules and exceptions, but also anomalies; the flawless and the repairable, but also the unamendable; the civilized and the convertible savage, but also the irreversible barbarian (Foucault, 2019, p. 159-167).

As Kalaidjian (2018) and Agamben (1998; 2004) remind us, the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" and their "urgent, imperative, exceptional" disregard for international law paved the way for the reappearance of the camp-like environment in U.S. detention centers. While acknowledging dissimilarities between the torture at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo *vis-à-vis* the genocidal horror of the Holocaust, the enduring symbolic resonance of atrocity connecting Auschwitz to these two detention centers gives rise to an unsettling *iteration* of a traumatic past (Kalaidjian, 2018, p. 2). Within this recurring cycle of revisiting a distressing past to avert "terror" in the future-to-come, abject detainees keep being submitted to sadistic practices.

The amalgamation of various incidents, knowledge methods, and policymaking (in)consistently led to the association of individuals, particularly those of "Arab," "Middle Eastern" and "Muslim" backgrounds[186], with the notion of "terrorism." As I showed in Chapter 2, "terrorism" and, consequently, "terrorist" are polysemic, controversial and unstable terms. These open-ended features are, then, the condition of possibility for violent practices – such as persecution, imprisonment and torture.

Paradoxically, within "Wars on Terrors," human life is precious but also disposable. Consequently, this contributed to the reinforcement of divisions, such as the asymmetric contrast between the "civilized West" and the "barbaric, backward, illiberal East/Orient." In this context, "human rights," which are upheld as universal principles – i.e., for all "humans" – appear to fall short when it comes to "terrorists," and, consequently, to lots of "Arabs," "Middle Easterners" and "Muslims" who are treated as *hostis generi humani* (enemies of humanity). As a result, a potentially hazardous situation emerged, in which violence was not only permitted but also legitimized and encouraged, were it to happen against the "terrorist enemy."

[186] If we observe the countries of origin of those detained in Guantánamo, for example, it is possible to show that most of its detainees came from countries with "Muslim" or / and "Arab" majorities, those being: Afghanistan (219), Saudi Arabia (134), Yemen (115), Pakistan (72), Algeria (23), Morocco (14), Sudan (12), Tunisia (12) Tajikistan (12), Kuwait (12), Syria (11), Libya (11), Jordan (9), Iraq (9) (The New York Times, 2003, n.p.). To see these numbers in more detail, visit: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/us/guantanamo-bay-detainees.html>.

4.4

A threatened nation: Im/migrants, asylum seekers and refugees as "terrorists in the making"

> Don't let people know that you're Muslim. It's dangerous.
>
> Presumption of Guilt, (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

> "[The prosecutors] think he's a terrorist, but when I ask them why, they won't tell me," […] The attorney told Human Rights Watch that he believed innocuous facts, such as that Asrar, who is an avid photographer, took pictures of the Atlanta skyline, were seen with suspicion because Asrar is South Asian. "There is no question in my mind that the prosecution of this case and the treatment of my client are unique because of his ethnicity," he said.
>
> Presumption of Guilt, (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

> A 14-year-old told our team she was taking care of a 4-year-old girl who had been placed in her cell with no relatives. "I take her to the bathroom, give her my extra food if she is hungry, and tell people to leave her alone if they are bothering her," she said. "She has been sick the whole time I have been taking care of her, and is coughing and has mucous. She doesn't talk hardly at all, just 'yes' and 'no.' She wears diapers and I change them for her."
>
> Clara Long (2019).

> When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best ... They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people. But I speak to border guards, and they tell us what we're getting. And it only makes common sense. It only makes common sense. They're sending us not the right people. It's coming from more than Mexico. It's coming from all over South and Latin America, and it's coming probably from the Middle East, but we don't know because we have no protection and we have no competence. We don't know what's happening. And it's gotta stop. And it's gotta stop fast.
>
> Donald Trump (2016)

Perhaps, those who dedicate some time to reading / thinking / learning about the USA has read or listened to sentences like "[i]mmigration is a foundation of America" (Brookings, n.d.); "we are a nation of immigrants" (Bush, 2006; Obama, 2016); or "the United States is a Nation of immigrants – shaped by the courageous people from around the world" (Biden, 2022). Ranging from our ancestors who were already on the move 300,000 years ago – overcoming climatic and geographical adversities and migrating in pursuit of a better life (McNeill, 1984) – to groups of people that nowadays flee conflicts, poverty, natural disasters and political persecution, also in pursuit of a somehow better life – there is no lack of histories, stories and images of "im/migrants," "asylum seekers" and "refugees."

Indeed, whether in political debates, academic writings or casual conversations, the names "asylum seeker," "immigrant," "migrant," and "refugee" are constantly invoked. It is noteworthy, however, that these names lack a distinct and universally accepted formal, legal definition (UN, 2023). Nonetheless, they are often referred to as "proper names," implying pre-existing understandings – much

like “terrorism,” “terrorist,” “Arab,” “Muslim,” and so forth. This way, conventionally, they are conceptualized as follows: “asylum seeker” as “a person who has been forced to leave their own country because they are in danger and who arrives in another country asking to be allowed to stay there” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, 2023); “immigrant” as “a person who has come to live permanently in a different country from the one they were born in” (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 2023); “migrant” as “a person who moves from one place to another in order to find work or better living conditions” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, 2023); and “refugee” as “a person who has been forced to leave their country or home, because there is a war or for political, religious or social reasons” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, 2023).

The UN (2023, n.p.) recognizes that, despite the absence of formal definitions, authorities and experts concur that “international migrants” (n.p.) are those individuals who relocate their country of residence, regardless of the reason for migration or their legal status. “Refugees,” on the other hand, find themselves outside their homeland in need of protection, due to concerns of potential persecution, conflict, violence, or other conditions that have significantly disrupted “public order” (Amnesty International, 2023; UN, 2023)[187]. Amnesty International (2023, n.p.) recognizes that “asylum seekers,” “immigrants,” and “refugees” refer to “people who are on the move, who have left their countries and have crossed borders.” However, it asserts that they could be differentiated. This way, Amnesty International (2023) definitions of “immigrant” and “refugee” align with those of the UN (2023). Additionally, it asserts that an “asylum seeker” is “a person who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country, but who hasn’t yet been legally recognized as a refugee and is waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim.” (2023, n.p.).

[187] See also: United Nations. 2023. The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. United Nations Human Rights - Office of the High Commissioner. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-relating-status-refugees>; United Nations. 2005. The International Convention on Migrant Workers and its Committee. Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. United Nations Human Rights - Office of the High Commissioner. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/cmw>; and United Nations. Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, 1984. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/media/cartagena-declaration-refugees-adopted-colloquium-international-protection-refugees-central>.

All of these attempts to define "asylum seekers," "im/migrants" and "refugees" presuppose the ideas of "belonging to a specific place," "belonging to a nation;" a distinction between a "better" and a "worse" place to live at; of feeling in "danger" and looking for "protection;" the "will" of moving elsewhere or a "necessity" to go into exile; of a "here" and a "there;" of a problematic "before" and a "future" of hope; of an "inside" and an "outside" of "nation states;" of a "domestic" and an "international." That is, it appears that within these dichotomies lie the condition of possibility of being a "citizen," a "national," an "im/migrant," a "refugee," an "insider," an "outsider," a "familiar," or a "stranger," and an "alien."

It is important to highlight that "asylum seekers," "im/migrants," and "refugees" re-present (Said, 2007) another example of people who have been constantly separated from the "rest of humanity" through enmity lines. (Not exclusively), in the last years we have been constantly observing the constant flow of human beings trying to flee "civils wars," conflicts, invasions, natural disasters, violence and persecution. And even though the United Nations' 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol forbid governments all over the world to send "refugees" back home because it could risk their lives[188], we can observe increasing numbers of pushbacks, removals, returns, deportations, bans, as well as violations and robbing of people on the move (US Congress, 2006; Proclamation 9645, 2017; UNHCR, 2022; Homeland Security, 2022; ECRE, 2023).

In a similar vein, and also because of these constant flows of human beings trying to relocate, discussions regarding "nationalism," "nation," "nationality" and the "nation-state" are frequently evoked in studies of IR or in everyday debates. If we take a look at recent discussions, the idea that "nationalism" had a significant impact on the course of the 20th century seems to prevail, whether due to the two "World Wars;" the "decolonization movements" in the "African" continent, in the "Middle East" and in "Asia;" the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR); or a fear, stressed by world leaders, of "nationalist dangerous waves" and of "new wars" (Chatterjee, 1993; Kaldor, 2012).

Moreover, throughout the 21st century, the notion of "nationalism" has been deployed in different ways: as a justification for the pursuit of "Wars on Terrors,"

[188] Article 33 of the 1951 Refugee Convention establishes the "non-refoulement" principle. This principle dictates that "refugees" should not be sent back to a location where their life and freedom are in jeopardy (UNHCR, 1951).

in the context of national defense strategies addressing increasing migratory waves from "Latin America," "Africa," the "Middle East," and "South Asia", or as a driving force behind political campaigns, such as those of Donald Trump, Boris Johnson, Evo Morales, Jair Bolsonaro, Marine Le Pen, Nicolás Maduro, and Viktor Orbán – to name a few. In this regard, this "signifier" has been constantly resurrected and (re)activated to serve as a protective shield or as a problem to different projects.

Regarding this scenario, countless analyses have arisen with the aim of understanding and / or moving beyond "nationalism."[189] However, according to Stephens (2013), such attempts proved to be unable to fulfill their transcendental promises, after all "[...] nationalism continues to be a problem" (p. 1). Stephens (2013) stresses that these attempts to explore what lies "beyond the nation"– may they be called "globalist, multicultural or cosmopolitan" – often contain residues of "nationalism." For this reason, these approaches, despite their claim to celebrate the difference, serve, otherwise, to reinforce notions of difference and collective identification. Therefore, as Stephens (2013) puts it, "nationalist imaginaries" shape political and social thinking. And, I would add, "nationalist imaginaries" justify violences and paves the way for "wars" against an-*other*.

Together with "nationalism" and its impact on the flows of "im/migrants," "asylum seekers," and "refugees," it is also important to pay attention to the mobilization of identities in world politics. Balibar (2017), in *Reinventing the Stranger: walls all over the world, and how to tear them down*, illustrates how the mobilization of terms such as "the stranger" and "the alien" has the potential to transform human beings into either an "enemy" or a potential "criminal." He elucidates how this violent process impacts the prospect of belonging, thereby affecting the possibilities of a "citizenship" and a "nationality." Furthermore, Balibar (2017) posits that, in contrast to the "foreigner" who still possesses legal significance, citizenship and status, and who despite being considered different is welcomed into a world of nation-states and communities, the "stranger" and the

[189] Benedict Anderson (1991) sees "nationalism" as an expression of "imagined communities" while Charta Patterjee (1993) wonders "whose imagined communities?" Eric Hobsbawm (1983) observes the "invention of tradition;" Anne Marie Thièsse (2000) thinks about "nationalism" through the importance of *des fictions créatrices*; Michael Billig (2002) delves into the fluidity of what he terms "banal nationalism;" and so forth.

"alien" are regarded as those with an essential dissymmetry, that is, as inherently asymmetrical entities.

Not only that, while the "stranger" is perceived/experienced as someone different and is not linked to any specific nationality, the "alien" situation is worse, for they are considered a threat to "our identity" or "our nation" and, potentially, to "our" very existence, being, therefore an asymmetrical non-assimilable entity. In this sense, we can assume that these classifications introduce violent possibilities, especially towards "asylum seekers," "im/migrants," "refugees" – may they be documented or undocumented[190] – and justify violent, imperial encounters (Doty, 1996), through returns, removals, detentions, the construction of walls, and the proliferation of checkpoints. What is even more concerning is that these categorizations can pave the way for advocating for the elimination of their presence or even the erasure of their existence (Balibar, 2017, p. 32), making some individuals into abject others (Devetak, 2005), as they "convey the idea of asymmetrical encounters in which one entity has been able to construct 'realities' that were taken seriously and acted upon and the other entity has been denied equal degrees or kinds of agency" (Doty, 1996, p. 3).

In this sense, the proliferation of walls and its combination with discourses, institutions, policies and technologies are deeply connected with attempts to promote the "protection against threats, generally pictured as 'invasions,' material or immaterial […]" (Balibar, 2017, p. 25-26). Also, we should bear in mind that there is an "institutional polysemy of the border as a line of separation," for a border is not only seen as demarcating territories and sovereignties, but also as signifying the potential division between "peace" and "war" (p. 27); between who is admissible and who is not; between whose life matters and whose life does not matter and is not matter. In other words, "borders are ubiquitous in [and constitutive of] political life" (Vaughan-Williams, 2009b, p. 1).

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[190] It is important to highlight that, according to international law, there is no such thing as an "illegal migrant," but rather an irregular or undocumented migrant, as established by the 1990 *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*. However, in recent decades there have been movements to criminalize migration. To understand more about the subject, see: United Nations. 1990. *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families*. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-rights-all-migrant-workers>; Squire, Vicki. *The Contested Politics of Mobility: Border zones and Irregularity*. UK: Routledge; and Nyers, Peter. 2010. No one is illegal between City and Nation. *Studies in Social Justice*. Vol 4, Issue 2, 127-143.

Borders are not inherent, fixed, or impartial; instead, they are created and maintained through the ongoing processes of affirmation and contestation. Through borders, it becomes feasible to continually reinforce distinctions between "inclusion" and "exclusion," as well as "inside" and "outside" (Vaughan-Williams, 2009, p. 2). This way, according to Balibar (2017), "borders" can be considered the *undemocratic condition of democracy* itself, as they are an "essential institution of the modern state or the political *qua* articulation of society and state […] or the point where democracy exists on the condition of its opposite (therefore in a contradictory and perfect manner)" (p. 29).

This way, it is important to pay attention to "foreign policy" boundary-producing-political-performances at work, through institutions, policies, and technologies[191] – discourses, *textiles* –, such as Executive Orders, NSS, acts, party platforms, and declarations that not only promise but promote travel bans, checkpoints, deportations, removals and returns to "protect" the USA against "threats" and "invasions" – as if there were an original and legitimate identity and nation to be defended. For the "Wars on Terrors" *textiles* rely on ideas of "democracy," "peace," "freedom," "humanity," "security," and "nationalism" – to name a few. Through these textiles, individuals characterized as a "stranger," an "alien," an "im/migrant," an "asylum seeker," or a "refugee" are often perceived as "potential threats," seen as posing risks to ideals of cohesion, unity, and order. Consequently, "they" are often stigmatized as potential "terrorists in the making" (Fullerton, 2017).

Perhaps the first name that comes to mind when we think about unwelcomed "asylum seekers, "im/migrants," and "refugees" in the USA is that of former President Donald J. Trump, as his electoral campaigns and administration were marked by conservative and aggressive positions on issues of gender, abortion, economy, criminal justice, "im/migration," and by slogans like "America First" and "Build the wall!". Also because he reinforced ideas such as that "[...] the proper wall never got built. I'll get it built. [...] where walls go up, illegal crossings go way

[191] We can observe them at work at places such as The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP); The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS); The U.S. Department of State; The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), through the Executive Office for Immigration Review; The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR); The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD); and the U.S. Coast Guard.

down. […] Simply put, walls work, and walls save lives. So let's work together, compromise, and reach a deal that will truly make America safe" (Trump, 2019, n.p.).

However, illustrations of such policies and sentiments extend beyond his tenure, for as Mendoza (2023) cleverly posits "America's border wall is bipartisan." The "Illegal Immigration Reform And Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996," for example, shows us this is an ongoing debate. As Matos and Bryant (2022, n.p.) put it, IIRIRA is "a set of laws that criminalized immigrants and centered imprisonment and punishment as core components of the nation's immigration system." And why is that? Because this act increases border enforcement and investigative personnel, discourages "unlawful immigration" to the USA, enhances sanctions for "alien smuggling" and document forgery, enhances the employment eligibility verification system, and proposes to implement other measures, such as the revision of the "legal immigration framework" in order to regulate entry procedures into the United States. This way, by empowering "border security," it facilitates imprisonment and deportations of "im/migrants" "refugees" and "asylum seekers" (IIRIRA, 1996; Matos and Bryant, 2022).

Furthermore, aforementioned discourses refer to these "asylum seekers," "im/migrants," "refugees," "foreigners," "strangers," and "aliens." On the one hand, we can find declarations that "America is a nation of immigrants" (Bush, 2006); that "we are a nation of immigrants" (Obama, 2016); that "the United States understands the contributions immigrants have made to our Nation throughout its history" (NSS, 2017); that "the United States is a Nation of immigrants — shaped by the courageous people from around the world" (Biden, 2022); and that welcomes "immigrants from around the world, who enrich our society" (NSS, 2010) and "orderly flows that can fuel economic growth in the United States and across the region" (NSS, 2022). On the other hand, however, these same declarations state that "we're also a nation of laws" (Bush, 2006; Obama, 2014), that "illegal immigration […] burdens the economy, hurts American workers, presents public safety risks, and enriches smugglers and other criminals" (NSS, 2017), and that "irregular migration, and other threats often emerge or accelerate due to deeper development challenges, and once they do, they do not recognize national borders" (NSS, 2022).

Additionally, the PATRIOT Act (2004), while promising to "intercept and obstruct terrorism" mentions "aliens" 167 times and states that "in light of the terrorist attacks perpetrated against the United States on September 11, 2011 [it] should fully implement the integrated and entry and exit data system for airports, seaports, and land border ports of entry" (p. 353), establish the "participation of office of homeland security on entry-exit task force" (p. 354) and deal with "foreign student monitoring program" (p. 354).

The PATRIOT Act's replacement, the U.S. FREEDOM Act (2015, p. 298), also established the need of dealing with "dangerous others" through the implementation "Enhanced National Security Provisions," which were to be activated during emergency situations that involve non-United States persons. In this case, this act established "the lawfully authorized targeting of a non-United States person previously believed to be located outside the United States for the acquisition of foreign intelligence information may continue for a period not to exceed 72 hours from the time that the non-United States person is reasonably believed to be located inside the United States."

Similarly, the U.S. National Security Strategies published in the 21st century place emphasis on "borders" and groups such as "im/migrants," "refugees," "foreigners," and "aliens" as recipients of particular attention – i.e., in the realm of "national security." The NSS of 2002 asserts that, in order to defend the nation, the USA would commit to destroying "terrorist organizations" before they reach "our borders" (p. 6) It also promises that "border control" would work by stopping "terrorism" and by improving efficient and legal traffic of peoples (p. 7).

Conversely, the 2010 NSS articulates concerns about "global criminal networks" (p. 8), including "transnational terrorist organizations," which are perceived as sources of insecurity by enabling the infiltration of "threatening individuals" and contraband across U.S. borders (p. 8-15). Due to the supposed existence of a "crime-terror nexus" (p. 49), it commits to cultivating a secure homeland resilient to "terrorism." This way, part of its strategy involves advocating for a "comprehensive immigration reform" that strikes a "balance between security and openness," aimed at deterring unlawful entries while still permitting the presence of skilled professionals (p. 29-30).

In a similar vein, the 2019 NSS commits to safeguarding the sovereignty of the United States by addressing what it perceives as vulnerabilities arising from

porous borders and weak "immigration" regulations (p. i). The NSS underscores the necessity of regaining control before "potential threats" approach the U.S. borders (p. 4) across various domains such as land, air, maritime, space, and cyberspace (p. 8). In this context, it asserts that bolstering border and "immigration" control policies is fundamental for "American security." To achieve this, the NSS pledges to construct a border wall and leverage technology and skilled personnel to prevent unauthorized entries (p. 10). Furthermore, it declares its intent to improve the screening of prospective "immigrants," "refugees," and other "foreign visitors" to identify those who "may pose a risk to national security and public safety" (p. 10). Put simply, the 2017 NSS commits to keeping "threatening individuals out of the United States" and identifying and deterring "those who may already be present within our borders" (p. 10).

The 2022 NSS also places a significant emphasis on the challenges that transcend borders, such as "terrorism" (p. 6). In so doing, it draws attention to the imperative of addressing the growing "movement of people throughout the Americas, including over six million Venezuelans" (p. 40). On one hand, this NSS advocates for a just and "humane migration management" approach, aiming to uphold the United States as a "global hub for talent" while combating the scourge of "illicit human smuggling and trafficking" (p. 40). However, on the other hand, it underscores that there are alarming "transnational threats," which disregard national boundaries, and have the capacity to "undermine development, fuel poverty, and human suffering." These "threats" encompass infectious diseases, "violent extremism," "terrorism," and "irregular migration" (p. 19).

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the Bush administration Party Platform[192] dedicates a section on "Supporting Humane and Legal Immigration." In so doing, it pledges to seek a system reform to make it "legal, safe, orderly, and humane," without forgetting national security. It recognizes the contributions of "im/migrants" to that country's strength and prosperity. Because of that, it proposes a temporary worker program for jobs Americans cannot fill, allowing workers to

192 The Republican Party Platform is a document elaborated by the Grand Old Party (GOP) before every Presidential election since 1856 – except for 2020 –and is a result of debates and votes inside the Party in order to outline issues the government would like to work on. All Party Platforms – both Republican and Democratic – can be accessed at: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/presidential-documents-archive-guidebook/party-platforms-and-nominating-conventions-3>.

"come out of the shadows and apply for citizenship." However, it also advocates "strong workplace enforcement" with penalties for "immigration law violations" and opposes amnesty, as it would encourage "illegal immigration." Put simply, the document endorses "efforts to enforce the law while welcoming immigrants who enter through legal avenues" (Republican Party Platform, 2004, n.p.). Two years later, President Bush signed the "Secure Fence Act of 2006," a legislation that pledged to deter "unlawful entry by aliens" (p. 2638). This way, this act highlighted the aim to enhance "security" along both the land and maritime borders (p. 2638) and authorized the construction of a 700-mile wall (approximately 1,100 kilometers) along the Mexico-U.S. border.

In contrast, as previously mentioned, the Obama administration introduced a series of initiatives and comprehensive reforms in response to the deep flaws it perceived in the U.S. immigration system. These flaws, according to Obama's Democratic Party Platform, included family separations, the imposition of a burden on law enforcement, and the relegation of millions of individuals to the shadows (Democratic Party Platform, 2008, n.p.)[193]. Notably, the administration is recognized for progressive measures such as the "Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals" (DACA), an executive action that provided protection for young individuals who arrived in the USA as undocumented children (The Obama Foundation, 2022); and the 2012[194] and 2014[195] amnesties, which, respectively, stopped deporting young immigrants and offered legal status to millions of

[193] The Democratic Party Platform has been elaborated since 1840, before every Presidential election.

[194] In the 2012 "Remarks by the President on Immigration," Barack Obama pointed out: "That's what gave rise to the DREAM Act. It says that if your parents brought you here as a child, if you've been here for five years, and you're willing to go to college or serve in our military, you can one day earn your citizenship [...] it makes no sense to expel talented young people, who, for all intents and purposes, are Americans -- they've been raised as Americans; understand themselves to be part of this country -- to expel these young people who want to staff our labs, or start new businesses, or defend our country simply because of the actions of their parents -- or because of the inaction of politicians."

[195] Similarly, in the 2014 "Remarks by the President on Immigration," Obama highlighted that "[...] and let's be honest – tracking down, rounding up, and deporting millions of people isn't realistic. Anyone who suggests otherwise isn't being straight with you. It's also not who we are as Americans. After all, most of these immigrants have been here a long time. They work hard, often in tough, low-paying jobs. They support their families. They worship at our churches. Many of their kids are American-born or spent most of their lives here, and their hopes, dreams, and patriotism are just like ours. As my predecessor, President Bush, once put it: "They are a part of American life."

undocumented people – approximately 4 million adults and 300,000 children in 2014 (CNN, 2012; ABC News, 2014).

However, as Hernández (2015) demonstrates, the President – who frequently invoked phrases like "My fellow citizens" and "We, the people" –, advocated for a "comprehensive immigration reform" that fell short of being both comprehensive and truly reformative (p. 38), as deportations increased during his two terms (One Percent For America, 2023). According to the table provided by the Department of Homeland Security "Aliens removed or Returned: Fiscal Years 1892 to 2019,"[196] it is possible to observe that during the Obama years, more people have been removed[197] or returned[198][199][200] than during Bush[201] and Trump[202] years. Worse, more people have been removed than in all administrations of the 20th century[203]. This scenario rendered, in "im/migration groups," President Barack Obama the informal title of "Deporter in Chief" (ABC News, 2016; Nowrasteh, 2019).

As I mentioned a few pages earlier, when it comes to "im/migration," "asylum seeking," and "refuge," Donald Trump's name often stands out. This is likely because, contrary to his predecessors, his rhetoric, along with that of his administration, was notably less polished and more overtly aggressive. President Trump campaign and administration mobilized "identities" and "nationalist" elements. His Republican Party Platforms[204] consistently maintained a strict and conservative stance on issues like "im/migration." In this sense, when the 2016 platform mentions "We, the People" and the notion of "Restoring the American Dream," it articulates the perspective of a collective "we," of a specific community,

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[196] Data is available at: <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2019/table39>.

[197] According to the DHS (2022, n.p.), "removals are the compulsory and confirmed movement of an inadmissible or deportable alien out of the United States based on an order of removal. An alien who is removed has administrative or criminal consequences placed on subsequent reentry owing to the fact of the removal."

[198] According to the DHS (2022, n.p.), "Returns are the confirmed movement of an inadmissible or deportable alien out of the United States not based on an order of removal."

[199] Also, according to USA Facts (2023, n.p.), "A removal involves a formal court order, whereas a return does not. Returns can only be performed for those from Mexico and Canada, countries adjacent to the US. Someone subject to a removal is ineligible to apply to enter the US legally for a period of time."

[200] 3,062581 removals and 2,186,487 returns (DHS, 2022).

[201] 2,012,539 removals and 2,647,947 returns (DHS, 2022).

[202] 975, 694 removals and 432,08 returns (DHS, 2022). However, it is important to stress that data regarding the Trump administration goes only as far as 2019 and uniform data of the Biden administration is not available yet – at least in official channels.

[203] 2,630,532 removals. Data regarding returns is incomplete. (DHS, 2022)

[204] Albeit being elaborated before every Presidential election since 1856, in 2020 Donald Trump's campaign opted to maintain the 2016 document. In so doing, the 2016 intact document included all controversies and outdated claims (Karson and Cunningham, 2020).

a "we" that adheres to the belief in "American exceptionalism" (Resende, 2012), asserting that the U.S. is a unique nation, "unlike any other nation on earth." It emphasizes the pursuit of *friendly* relations with all nations and peoples, acknowledging *pari passu* a readiness to *confront* global challenges. This platform also laments an apparent decline in the U.S. position in the world, noting that "our enemies no longer fear us, and our friends no longer trust us" (p. i). In a way, this document proposes to re-present a "community," a "collective," a "nation" with a distinct identity that sets it apart from "others," particularly those perceived as "evil or alien enemies"

A section of Donald Trump's platform addresses the issue of "Immigration and the rule of law." Within this section, the platform emphasizes the need for the "immigration system" to safeguard the well-being of American working families and their wages, benefiting both "citizens and legal immigrants" (p. 25). And even though the expresses gratitude for the contributions of thousands of new "legal immigrants," it also asserts that the "America's immigration policy must serve the national interest of the United States, and the interests of American works must be protected over the claims of foreign nationals seeking the same jobs" (p. 25). In this context, the platform takes a critical stance towards "illegal immigrants," as it underscores that

> With all our fellow citizens, we have watched, in anger and disgust, the mocking of our immigration laws by a president who made himself superior to the will of the nations. We stand with the victims of his policies, especially the families of murdered innocents. Illegal immigration endangers everyone, exploits taxpayers, and insults all who aspire to enter America legally (p. 25).

Trump's platform also opposes the 2012 and 2014 amnesties, deeming them unlawful measures that permit the presence and growth of "terrorism," "drug cartels," "human trafficking," "criminal gangs," and "unidentified individuals." According to the platform, these entities pose "dangerous threats" to the safety and sovereignty of the USA (p. 26). Thus, this document, akin to numerous *textiles* – declarations, policies and actions – of the Trump administration[205], reflects hostile

[205] In the 2019 State of the Union Address, Trump alerted his audience: "As we speak, large, organized caravans are on the march to the United States. We have just heard that Mexican cities, in order to remove the illegal immigrants from their communities, are getting trucks and buses to

sentiments towards the "other," particularly the "illegal immigrant." While there appears to be some room for "legal migrants" aspiring to become American citizens – "some" because it prioritizes American citizens and their job opportunities, encapsulated in the "America First" *ethos* – the "illegal immigrant" is relegated to a wholly contrasting, asymmetric, and disgraced position — an "alien" portrayed as a "threat" to America's very existence, engaging in acts of violence, mockery, and exploitation. These positions advocated by the platform can be exemplified through a well-known episode that occurred during Trump's tenure. In this occasion, Trump questioned a group of lawmakers, asking, "Why are we having all these people from shithole countries come here?", "Why do we need more Haitians? Take them out!" (Watkins and Phillip, 2018, n.p.).

This way, the materialization of the Trump administration aversion to an-*other* can be observed in the Executive Order 13767 *Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements* of January 2017, which asserted the necessity of border security in order to maintain the U.S. "national security" and, in so doing, mandated the construction of a wall along the border between the United States and Mexico[206], and placed a significant focus on the strict

bring them up to our country in areas where there is little border protection. I have ordered another 3,750 troops to our southern border to prepare for the tremendous onslaught. This is a moral issue. The lawless state of our southern border is a threat to the safety, security, and financial well-being of all Americans. We have a moral duty to create an immigration system that protects the lives and jobs of our citizens. This includes our obligation to the millions of immigrants living here today, who followed the rules and respected our laws. Legal immigrants enrich our Nation and strengthen our society in countless ways. I want people to come into our country, but they have to come in legally."

[206] The construction of border fences/walls along the U.S.-Mexico border goes back to the times of Democrats Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1933-1945) and Harry S. Truman (1945-1953). According to Mendoza (2023), these fences were initially used to prevent animal crossings. However, their focus shifted as significant human migration from south to north increased during the 1940s and 1950s. By 1953, the end of Harry Truman's administration, fencing had been installed in most border cities. Later, in 1969, President Richard Nixon (1969-1974), through "Operation Intercept," aimed at combatting drug trafficking, enhancing security and surveillance but not building physical barriers. This way, through "Operation Interception," bordering did not assume a physical appearance – in the form of fences – but rather a virtual surveillance character. During Jimmy Carter's administration (1977-1981), in a context of economic crisis and an increasing concern with the presence of "im/migrants" from Mexico and their labor force, a larger and stronger fence was erected in 1979. Subsequently, President Ronald Reagan (1981-1989), addressed the USA-Mexico border through "Operation Intercept." Because of this operation, the border was closed briefly in 1985. In 1989, Reagan issued the "*Immigration Reform and Control Act*," which, on the one hand legalized over 2 million "illegal im/migrants," but, on the other hand increased border enforcement funding. President Reagan did not build additional fences/walls. However, once again, we must remember that boundary practices do not need a visible and physical expression made of wood, bricks and concrete. In the 1990s, during Bill Clinton (1993-2001) administration, we can observe a move toward physically securing the border. Democrat Bill Clinton initiated multiple border

enforcement of "immigration regulations." This position is also evident in his administration's discriminatory effort to restrict the entry of "specific foreign individuals" into the United States, aimed at "protecting the nation from potential foreign terrorist threats." This effort was briefly materialized (Fullerton, 2017) through Executive Order 13769 *Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States* of January 2017, and the subsequent revised Executive Order 13780, issued on March 6, 2017, which bears the same name of its predecessor.

Executive Order 13769, famously known as "the travel ban," suspended the entry of people of seven countries for 90 days, those being: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen, as it considered that "these are countries that had already been identified as presenting heightened concerns about terrorism and travel to the United States" (EO 13769, 2017, n.p.). However, due to public opposition and judicial injunctions (Fullerton, 2017), it was replaced less than two months later by Executive Order 13780, a.k.a. "Travel Ban 2.0" (Jarrett and Labott, 2017), which, however, omitted direct references to September 11, 2001, and religion. This Executive Order imposed a 90-day entry restriction on people from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen – Iraq was removed from this list[207]. It also prohibited, for 120 days, the entry of "refugees" who lacked a visa or valid travel documents.

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operations, including "Operation Hold the Line," "Operation Safeguard," and "Operation Gatekeeper," constructing fences. These barriers, accompanied by NAFTA's implementation, did not deter crossings but diverted migrants to perilous areas, resulting in a surge in deaths (Mendoza, 2023, n.p.).

[207] As per Fullerton (2017), this resulted from a significant public outcry that brought attention to Iraqis who had put their lives at risk by supporting U.S. forces. This way, the Executive Order explains that "(g) Iraq presents a special case. Portions of Iraq remain active combat zones. Since 2014, ISIS has had dominant influence over significant territory in northern and central Iraq. Although that influence has been significantly reduced due to the efforts and sacrifices of the Iraqi government and armed forces, working along with a United States-led coalition, the ongoing conflict has impacted the Iraqi government's capacity to secure its borders and to identify fraudulent travel documents. Nevertheless, the close cooperative relationship between the United States and the democratically elected Iraqi government, the strong United States diplomatic presence in Iraq, the significant presence of United States forces in Iraq, and Iraq's commitment to combat ISIS justify different treatment for Iraq. In particular, those Iraqi government forces that have fought to regain more than half of the territory previously dominated by ISIS have shown steadfast determination and earned enduring respect as they battle an armed group that is the common enemy of Iraq and the United States. In addition, since Executive Order 13769 was issued, the Iraqi government has expressly undertaken steps to enhance travel documentation, information sharing, and the return of Iraqi nationals subject to final orders of removal. Decisions about issuance of visas or granting admission to Iraqi nationals should be subjected to additional scrutiny to determine if applicants have connections with ISIS or other terrorist organizations, or otherwise pose a risk to either national security or public safety." (EO 13780, 2017, n.p.)

Furthermore, there is the *Presidential Proclamation 9645: Enhancing Vetting Capabilities and Processes for Detecting Attempted Entry Into the United States by Terrorists or Other Public-Safety Threats*, issued in September 2017, also commonly referred to as another "travel ban." This proclamation imposed limitations on "im/migration" and travel procedures for countries that were identified as having a "notable terrorist presence" within their borders, i.e. "Chad, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen" (n.p.). Notably, this policy was suspended on the final day of Trump's presidency, when he signed "Presidential Proclamation 9983" on January 20, 2021.

While Trump's administration may not have deported as many individuals as his predecessors, it does not imply a less violent process. To illustrate, we could consider instances such as: Until 2019, U.S. immigration authorities separated more than 5,400 children from their parents at the border (Associated Press, 2019). Also, his administration encouraged a hostile climate toward "Muslim" populations, as the President retweeted "anti-Muslim propaganda" from ultra-nationalist groups, contemplated the closure of mosques in the USA, and employed questionable data to justify a travel ban targeting "Muslim-majority nations" (EO 17380, 2017; Krieg, 2017). Additionally, Trump's irresponsible and racially insensitive rhetoric during the COVID-19 pandemic, calling it the "Kung flu," fueled discrimination against "Asian" populations (BBC, 2020). Furthermore, his administration enacted restrictions on "foreign workers" and extended restrictions on "im/migration" (EO 17380, 2017).

In this context, it becomes evident that the Trump administration amalgamated notions of "radical Islamic terrorism," "African Americans," and "Central American Migrants" into a single specter – that of a "nonwhite-outsider-threat" that would subvert, or invade and "terrorize" the USA (Wertheim, 2020, n.p.). Furthermore, as noted by Wertheim (2020), despite official low numbers of deportations, the Trump administration encouraged "anti-immigrant vigilantism." This involved groups self-identifying as "patriots" who took it upon themselves to patrol their communities, actively seeking and apprehending undocumented "im/migrants." On occasion, these vigilantes delivered the apprehended individuals to law enforcement, however, there were instances where they resorted to violent measures against "undocumented im/migrants" themselves.

Biden's 2020 Democratic Platform described a commitment to diversity and extended compassion to those who aspire *to be part of* the USA. It promised to establish a "modern and humane immigration system," designed to benefit the well-being of *all Americans*. With regard to "im/migration," it proposed a "comprehensive immigration reform," focusing on rectifying past injustices, economic growth, and global leadership restoration. To do so, it pledged to revoking discriminatory travel bans, protecting Dreamers and their parents, expanding "asylum seekers" protections, addressing systemic racism, promoting family reunification, and providing a path to citizenship for undocumented individuals. It also pledged to address human trafficking, ensuring "humane immigration enforcement," ending for-profit detention centers, and promoting legal, permanent "immigration."

In a similar vein, Executive Order 14010[208], signed by President Biden on February 2, 2021, pledged to confront the root causes of "im/migration" and to improve the "asylum" system by providing safe and orderly processing (EO 14010, 2021). Likewise, in 2021, President Biden stated that it would be "the policy of my Administration that no more American taxpayer dollars be diverted to construct a border wall. I am also directing a careful review of all resources appropriated or redirected to construct a southern border wall" (The White House, 2021, n.p.). He also asserted that the previously declared national emergency under Proclamation 9844[209] was formally terminated. This way, authorities invoked in former declarations would no longer work for construction of a southern border wall (The White House, 2021).

Likewise the Obama administration, Biden's promised a comprehensive "im/migration" reform that can be illustrated in the case it achieved a deal with those thousands of "im/migrants" previously separated from their families at the Mexico-U.S. border (Ainsley and Soboroff, 2023)[210]. Biden's administration also

[208] "Executive Order on Creating a Comprehensive Regional Framework to Address the Causes of Migration, to Manage Migration Throughout North and Central America, and to Provide Safe and Orderly Processing of Asylum Seekers at the United States Border."
[209] Proclamation 9844, issued on February 15, 2019 declared a "National Emergency Concerning the Southern Border of the United States."
[210] According to Ainsley and Soboroff, the deal reached "allows the families to live and work in the U.S. for three years while receiving housing, mental health and legal assistance to apply for asylum. The settlement also prohibits the federal government from separating any migrant families crossing the border for eight years merely for violating U.S. immigration laws. [However] families could be separated only if the parents are considered a danger to their children or the public" (2023, n.p.).

asserted it would work in order to reform the U.S. "chaotic immigration system" (The White House, 2023, n.p.) However, we should bear in mind that, since its beginning, the administration also asserted that " like every nation, the United States has a right and a duty to secure its borders and protect its people against threats" (The White House, 2021, n.p.).

This way, albeit highlighting that "building a massive wall that spans the entire southern border is not a serious policy solution. […]" (The White House, 2021, n.p.), in 2023, the Biden administration is proceeding with a contentious strategy to extend the border wall in Texas, and, to pave the way for this scenario, it waived over two dozen federal environmental regulations to augment the barrier by 20 miles (Rosenberg and Bose 2023; Mendoza, 2023). As it is possible to note, this decision came despite President Biden's earlier commitment not to expand the border wall, and it coincided with an increase of "im/migrant" crossings along that border (Rosenberg and Bose 2023; Rascoe and Kocherga, 2023).

President Joe Biden's administration is, thereby, *continuing* a prominent policy established during the previous administration of President Donald Trump (Shear, 2023) – a policy criticized in his electoral platform, as it denounced the former administration for challenging "the American ideal of unity in diversity" and for creating "im/migration" policies that "have made our communities less safe, undermined our economy, and tarnished our image around the world" (The White House, 2021, n.p.). Also, as of 2023, the administration has been ramping up deportations (Gutierrez, 2023)[211]. Even though numbers show that there was a "42% drop in illegal border crossings since May 2023," the administration "repatriated" about 85,000 migrants (up to 65% more since last year) (Gutierrez, 2023, n.p.). Also, as of October, 2023, the administration started deporting Venezuelan "im/migrants" directly back to their country (Alvarez, 2023).

In their 2022 testimony[212], Human Rights First[213] reveals that despite promises made to reverse President Trump's strict and harsh immigration policies

[211] Regarding the Biden administration, so far, I have only been able to find numbers relating to the 2021 Fiscal Year. As of that year, approximately 89,191 individuals were removed from the USA and 178,227 were returned.

[212] This is a "Human Rights First's Submission for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution 43/6." (Human Rights First, 2022, n.p.).

[213] Human Rights First was established in 1978 with the mission of safeguarding refugees through research, legal representation, and advocating for their access to humanitarian protection within the

(The White House, 2021; 2023), President Biden's administration continues to employ expulsion policies that significantly impact children, woman, Black, and LGBTQIA+ "refugees"[214]. These policies not only result in family separations but also involve the unlawful[215] return of "asylum seekers" to dangerous locations[216] – violating the principle of non-refoulement. The testimony provides evidence of the Biden administration's continuity with previous administrations' severe approaches, as it highlights that between January 2021 and March 2022, nearly 20,000 Haitian individuals, including children and adults, some of whom sought "asylum," were repatriated to Haiti without access to the "asylum process."

This way, expulsion policies placed the lives of Haitian "asylum seekers," as well as those from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and other places, in jeopardy, as they were either trying to escape instability and violence or seeking improved living conditions (Human Rights First, 2022). Also, according to Human Rights First (2022), the Biden administration relied on the COVID-19 pandemic as a "exceptional scenario" to the USA. This way, "public health" expulsions of adults[217] compelled families to send children on their own across the border as a means to escape violence, threats, human trafficking, and various other perils, resulting in the separation of thousands of families.

It is possible to say that "Wars on Terrors" have been waged against "im/migrants," "asylum seekers," "refugees," "strangers," and "aliens" through bans, returns, removals, detention, checkpoints, hostilities, walls, and propaganda. Worse, through the use of cages, family separations, force feeding, and vigilantism. According to a 2002 Human Rights Watch report, *Presumption of Guilt: Human*

United States. In doing so, it actively presses the U.S. government to adhere to its domestic asylum legislation and international responsibilities toward refugees. See more at: <https://humanrightsfirst.org/>.

[214] "They include: an 18-year-old Nicaraguan political dissident expelled to Mexico under Title 42 even though he had twice been kidnapped there; a transgender Honduran asylum seeker expelled by DHS to Mexico where she had been kidnapped with another transgender woman who remains missing; and a Honduran asylum seeker who was held hostage for days after Mexican immigration agents turned him over to a cartel following his expulsion by DHS under Title 42." (Human Rights First, 2022, n.p.)

[215] The USA is a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, which imposes legal obligations, including adherence to what is established by the Article 33 – i.e. the "non-refoulement principle."

[216] For example: "Human Rights First has tracked at least 8,705 violent attacks and kidnappings suffered by asylum seekers turned away or stranded in Mexico, as a result of the Title 42 policy and other restrictions on access to asylum at the border, since President Biden took office in January 2021."

[217] Because of public protest and judicial orders, during Trump and Biden administrations, policies of expulsions did not apply to unaccompanied children (Human Rights First, 2022, n.p.).

Rights Abuses of Post-September 11 Detainees, investigations regarding the September, 2001 attacks has been permeated by arbitrary detentions, due process violations, as well as secret arrests. This way, the report estimates that, by 2002, more than 1,000 "non-citizens" have been secretly detained. Most of them were from "South Asian," "North African," and "Middle Eastern countries."

The report shows how in most cases detentions had been based on random encounters with law enforcement personnel, on national origins, religious background, or neighbor suspicions, rather than on detailed investigations. Likewise in Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib, these detainees also faced abusive interrogations, violation of consular rights, verbal and physical abuse, inadequate health care, inability to profess their religions, and the impossibility of reaching their families (HRW, 2002).

Additionally, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (2015) report, for example, expresses its concern on arbitrary practices of the "immigration detention system," for they subjected families to degrading conditions. These families, trying to enter the USA, have been subjected to detention at inadequate "family immigration detention centers" or at holding facilities" (p. 101). Also, the report denounces "turn-backs" and the failure to protect the needs of unaccompanied children (p. 101). This way, the Commission expressed that the detention of "im/migrants," "asylum seekers," and "refugees" constituted an "irregular situation [and] an undesirable measure" (p. 101).

Human Rights Watch (2019), in turn, denounced the government Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) force-feeding of "migrant hunger strikers," for, as shown in the last section, this is a cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment. According to this denounce, at least 33 men detained in the *El Paso* Processing Center, mostly from Cuba and India, were refusing food in protest due to verbal abuse and threats of deportation from guards. Because of their hunger strike, ICE officials submitted them to force-feeding, i.e., torture.

Perhaps, however, an emblematic illustration of abuses towards "im/migrants," "asylum seekers," and "refugees" lie in the experiences of children detained in the Mexico-U.S. border. A quick search on the internet can reveal heartbreaking images of small children, unable to take care of themselves, detained in cages after being caught trying to cross the border – either alone or with someone

from their family. According to the written testimony of Clara Long[218], *Kids in Cages: Inhumane Treatment on the Border* published by the Human Rights Watch (2002), in-depth interviews with children revealed inhumane conditions, as they are being held in prison-like facilities for countless days, with no chance of contacting their families, without access to proper hygiene, proper health care, proper food, proper clothes, proper beds, or any kind of affection. More shockingly, many of them could not / cannot take the bare-minimum care of themselves, because they were / are as young as 2 or 3 years old:

> The children I met with at Clint were visibly dirty, mucous or mud-stained, and nearly all wearing the same clothes they wore when they crossed the border. They told us they were not given regular access to soap or toothbrushes and were given access to showers only once or twice in a period of weeks, if at all. When they were given access to showers, they told us they were limited to a mere three minutes. Many of the children held at Clint said that they were separated from family members and sometimes their primary caregivers at the border, in clear contradiction of their best interest[219]. This is the regular practice of US Customs and Border Protection. Not only do such separations render children "unaccompanied" and expose them to prolonged detention, they wreak psychological harm comparable to separation from a parent (HRW, 2022, n.p.).

> An inconsolable 14-year-old boy I met at the Homestead detention center in late March summed up the impact of these kinds of separations. He had traveled from Guatemala with his 29-year-old sister and her son. "She's my oldest sibling in Guatemala and has always been there for me," he said. "She's like my mother. Sometimes I call her 'mom' because she's taken care of me my entire life." When they crossed the border into Texas and turned themselves into the Border Patrol they were detained in different cages. "On the third day they took me out of my cage and said I would be separated from my sister, but they didn't tell me where I was going. I don't understand why they separated us. They didn't give me a chance to say goodbye."

The U.S. Presidential administrations have implemented / allowed for different approaches to "im/migration" and family separation. Although President

[218] As of 2019, Clara Long was the "acting Deputy Washington Director and Senior Researcher on Immigration in the US Program at Human Rights Watch." (Human Rights Watch, 2019, n.p.).

[219] According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Article 3.1 – of which the USA is a party – children have the right to "their best interests assed and taken into account" (HRW, 2022). In this sense, "Article 3 1. In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. 2. States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures" (UN, 1989, n.p.).

Bush did sign legislation like the *Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act* (TVPRA), which provided protection for unaccompanied minors, his administration did, at times, separate certain families while detaining others together as their cases were being processed. President Bush also pledged to prosecute even first-time offenders apprehended while crossing the border unlawfully. However, unlike President Trump's policies, this approach did not lead to widespread separations of children from their parents (Cheathan and Roy, 2023).

Under the Obama administration, officials generally avoided family separations. However, they increased the detention of both children and parents in facilities that were often described as prison-like and unsanitary, leading to criticism that these actions violated due process and the *Flores settlement* (Immigration History, 1997)[220]. Furthermore, the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) under Obama faced scrutiny for accidentally placing unaccompanied children in the care of human traffickers (Gov Info, 2015[221]; Cheatham and Roy, 2023).

The Trump administration, in turn, implemented severe measures to discourage "asylum seekers" from attempting to reach the USA, which included increasing the capacity of "immigration detention facilities" and implementing family separations. These measures led to hazardous conditions for children who were not accompanied by their parents or guardians. However, the administration contended that the surge of arrivals at the border overwhelmed the "immigration system" and emphasized Congress's inability to augment funding for border security as a contributing factor.

A significant action happened in April 2018, when the DoJ introduced a "zero-tolerance policy," instructing law enforcement to detain and bring criminal charges against all adults apprehended upon unauthorized entry into the United States, rather than releasing them while they await "immigration" court hearings.

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[220] "The Flores settlement makes it an administrative responsibility to release children from detention without unnecessary delay to a parent or adult relative or licensed juvenile programs willing to accept custody. If temporary detention is deemed necessary for the child's well-being, the settlement mandates that the government must provide an age-appropriate setting with few restrictions, the ability to contact family, and appropriate standards of care and comfort, including food, water, and medical care. Since 1997, attorneys have regularly intervened on behalf of immigrant children and their families to force the federal government to respect the terms of the settlement." (Immigration History, 2019).

[221] To read the report provided by Republican Senator Rob Portman's investigation, visit: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-114shrg98445/html/CHRG-114shrg98445.htm>.

This policy led to the separation of over 4,000 children from their families, because minors cannot be kept in detention alongside their guardians who are awaiting trial. This way, these children were reclassified as unaccompanied between July 2017 and June 2018 (Cheatham and Roy, 2023).

The Biden administration is currently facing substantial scrutiny and criticism due to its failure to uphold its commitment to enact and enforce legal protections to children caught at the southern border (Human Rights First, 2022; Ainsley and Soboroff, 2023; Rosenberg and Bose 2023; Rascoe and Kocherga, 2023). According to Cheatham and Roy (2023), perhaps perceptions that Biden's administration would be more welcoming than Trump's helped in augmenting "im/migration," "asylum seeking" and "refuge" requests numbers. However, as we have observed, during the last years, under President Biden, deportations have risen[222].

This way, it is imperative to underscore that the challenges faced by "im/migrants," "asylum seekers," and "refugees" during the last years extend beyond "bad" or apparently "good" ideas, sentences, names and speeches, as they conjure discriminatory and/or violent actions upon those considered potential "terrorists" or "terrorists in waiting". This way, categorizations of human beings have material repercussions, as individuals conceived as "foreigners," "strangers," and "aliens" matter and *are* matter – who experience pain, cold, sick, hunger, and miss their families.

Interestingly, the United States administrations' pledge to hold responsibilities that transcend its territorial "boundaries," as articulated in the National Security Strategy of 2015, which emphasizes that "the United States government has no greater responsibility than protecting the American people. Yet, our obligations do not end at our borders" (NSS 2015, p. 1). Nevertheless, those attempting to enter its "borders" are often portrayed as the source of problems that should be pushed back or radically excluded. This way, it seems that "America" did not come "first" only for Trump and his followers. Rather, "America first," "legal, documented migrants second," and "illegal asymmetric, inadmissible aliens," nowhere.

[222] According to Cheathan and Roy (2023, n.p.) "Under Biden, overall deportations have risen: in FY2022 there were more than 111,000 deportations, almost three times the amount from a year earlier."

4.5
Antifa and white supremacists as “domestic terrorists”

> I am a Western chauvinist, and I refuse to apologize for creating the modern world.
>
> Declaration to acquire a first-degree membership at the Proud Boys (n.d.; n.p.).

> Non-whites who reside in America should be expected to conduct themselves according to Christian principles and must recognize that race mixing is definitely wrong and out of the question. It will be a privilege to live under the authority of a compassionate White Christian government.
>
> The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (n.d.; n.p.)

> […] they have engaged in campaigns of questioning community members and aggressively recruiting informants, sometimes threatening them with deportation or other punishment if they refused to cooperate. They have aggressively prosecuted women and men on barely constitutional theories of material support for terrorism — experts testifying at trial on the uniquely dangerous qualities of the communities from which they come. Our clients have been questioned for hours at the border by secret teams of U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers who rely on ‘’instincts’ nurtured by PowerPoint presentations bereft of any serious context.
>
> Diala Shamas and Tarek Z. Ismail (2021).

> She just started crying […] She was like, “Breonna’s been shot.” And I said, “What do you mean, she’s been shot?” And she said, “Your sister’s dead.”
>
> Ju’Niyah Palmer (apud Gibson, 2020, n.p.).

> “First they came for our immigrants, our Muslims, our refugees, and we said: ‘Not this time, motherfuckers!’”
>
> Demonstrators’ signs protesting Executive Order 13769[223]

There exists a widespread narrative that posits the USA as predominantly dedicated to the maintenance and dissemination of principles such as “freedom, justice, equality, and democracy” (Rich, 2007; see also section 2.3). The U.S. national anthem, for example, exclaims,

> [p]raise the power that hath made and preserv’d us a nation! Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just, and this be our motto – “In God is our trust,” and the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave o’er the land of the free and the home of the brave (1814, n.p.).

However, according to Wilbur Rich (2007, p. 232) and Dewey Clayton *et al.* (2021), in order to uphold principles like “freedom” and “equality,” as well as “justice” and “democracy,” it would be imperative for the USA and its “sentinels”

[223] To see some of the demonstrators signs used in protests that took place in January, 2017, visit: <https://twitter.com/sandersonjones/status/825621111362682884>

– i.e., its established authorities – to address openly and earnestly matters of "race." For "racial" relations do not belong to the footnotes of the histories of the USA; rather, they play an important "role in the discourse about the nature of the American presidency" (Rich, 2007, p. 232).

Since my main goal is contemplating "terrorism" and the U.S. "Wars on Terrors," and since this dissertation pays attention to boundary-producing-political-performances, it is imperative to also direct our focus toward some "-isms." These include, but are not limited to, "racism," "fascism," "supremacism," and "antifascism"[224], for a deconstructive reading demands an attentive regard for not only what has been naturalized, but also for what has been relegated to the "margins" (Derrida, 1984) or to what Wilbur Rich (2007, p. 232) calls the "footnotes of history."

While I do believe that "racial" relations and "racial" demands do not belong to the footnotes of history, of political thinking and of political action, I recognize that the condition of possibility of a "grand narrative" that pledges to spread, defend and uphold "freedom, equality, justice and democracy" relies on the existence of its asymmetric opposites. And among these asymmetric opposites lie "matters of race," "supremacism," and "fascism."

Derrida (1985, p. 292) aptly reminds us that the notion of "racism" – and, I would add, many other "-isms" – normalize certain constructs as "natural" and "original" while rendering others as "unnatural," "deviant," and "monstrous." And although they do not merely manifest through the use of derogatory language, Derrida posits that "there's no racism without a language" (p. 292). According to him, as "-isms" are brought into life, authorized and perpetuated, they earn a *name*, they earn a *word* to name them (p. 292). In this light, they are instrumental in instituting, proclaiming, inscribing, and prescribing some principles and forgetting others (Derrida, 1985, p. 292).

Consequently, they function as systems of categorization, delineating boundaries to either "assign forced residence or to close off borders." (Derrida, 1985, p. 292). This way, by resorting to "-isms," it is possible to construct specific

[224] Although I explore these words into more detail in the next pages, it is important to highlight, in advance, that placing the word "antifascism" alongside with "racism," "fascism," and "supremacism" do not mean I consider them to pertain to the same order; rather, especially regarding to "antifascism," and as the prefix "anti" indicates, these -isms refer to different political positions that could never reconcile.

representations of nature, life, history, religion, and law (p. 293), allowing for operations of discrimination rather than discernment (p. 292). In other words, resorting to "-isms" makes it possible to institute, proclaim, inscribe, and prescribe, derogatorily, that Arabs, Muslims, Middle Easterners, Latin Americans, South Asians, Africans, "people from 'shithole' countries" and so many *others* are "terrorists," or "terrorists in the making." More than that, it makes it possible to detain, torture, kill, ban, return, remove, deport, push, unwelcome or exterminate "them" in the name of "*our national* security."

Resorting to "-isms" also makes it possible to institute, proclaim, inscribe, and prescribe that there is an equivalence in movements such as "antifasc*ism*" and "white supremac*ism*" and, as we observe in the next pages, to label "them," both, as "violent extrem*ism*" and/or "domestic terror*ism*." Similarly to many words I have already invoked in the preceding pages, "racism," "fascism," "supremacism," "antifascism" and "extremism" permeate debates in IR and in everyday conversations.

If we visit, once again, dictionaries, we find definitions such as: "racism" as "the unfair treatment of people who belong to a different race; violent behavior towards them" (Oxford Learners Dictionary, 2023, n.p.), and "the belief that there are different races of people with different characteristics and abilities, and that some races are better than others; a general belief about a whole group of people based only on their race" (Oxford Learners Dictionary, 2023, n.p.); "fascism" as "an extreme right-wing political system or attitude that is in favour of strong central government, aggressively promoting your own country or race above others, and that does not allow any opposition" (Oxford Learners Dictionary, 2023, n.p.); "supremacist" as "a person who believes that the group of people they belong to is better than other groups and should have power over them" (Oxford Learners Dictionary, 2023, n.p.); and "white supremacist" as "a person who believes that white people are better than other groups and should have power over them" (Oxford Learners Dictionary, 2023, n.p.).

On the other hand, "antifa", short for "antifascism" appears as "a political protest movement of people who are against fascism" (Oxford Learners Dictionary, 2023, n.p.); and as a name "borrowed from German Antifa, short for *antifaschistisch* 'anti-fascist,' in *Antifaschistische Aktion* (multiparty front initiated by the German Communist Party in 1932 to counter Nazism) and in other

collocations" (Merriam-Webster, 2023, n.p.); and, to exemplify "antifa," dictionaries redirect us to movements such as "black lives matter,"[225] which appears as "a movement formed to campaign against racism and violence, especially police violence, against black people" (Oxford Learners Dictionary, 2023, n.p.).

While the "signifiers" of "racism, fascism and supremacism" are mostly associated to "right," "far-right," "alt-right" or "right-wing" ideologies[226]; "antifa" is mostly associated to "left," "far-left," "left-wing,"[227] "anti-racist," "anti-supremacist," "anti-LGBTQIA+phobic," "anti-misogynistic" ideas. Even though this constitute a play of endless supplementarity[228] – wherein "racism," "fascism" and "supremacism" are associated with a "right-wing" position, and "anti-racism," "antifascism," or "anti-supremacism" are associated to a "left-wing" position – each one of us presume, more or less, what these many "signifiers" mean – or what someone tries to mean when invoking them.

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[225] It is important to stress, however, that although "antifa" and groups like "Black Lives Matter" share some causes, such as protesting policy brutality and "racism," they do not share the same methods (Speckhard, 2020). According to Speckhard (2020, n.p.) "antifa's" methods of violent counter-protest include physical confrontations with far-right demonstrators as well as the police, as well as throwing objects intended to destroy property or injure their opponents. Online, they engage in an action known as 'doxxing,' which involves exposing far-right extremists' identities and social media accounts, leading to public shaming and aimed at their targets losing their jobs or social standing." Also, as I show in the following pages, "antifa" has neither an organized structure, nor a defined membership, or even a clearly defined doctrine. The "Black Lives Matter," on the other hand, defines itself as a "Global Network Foundation, Inc. […] a global organization in the US, UK, and Canada, whose mission is to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes. By combating and countering acts of violence, creating space for Black imagination and innovation, and centering Black joy, we are winning immediate improvements in our lives." (Black Lives Matter, n.d., n.p.)

[226] It is important to note that, according to Bray (2017, p. 109-110), "Unlike the Nazis of the 1930s, many alt-right ideologues try to circumvent societal opposition to the rhetoric of white superiority by incorporating elements of the French *nouvelle droite*—that is, by saying that inherent 'biological' differences between races dictate that they should promote their own homogeneity in order to thrive. If this 'natural' imperative is left unheeded, the result will be 'white genocide' at the hands of a growing population of color that is set to outnumber white people in the United States by mid-century. Against the increasingly popular leftist concept of 'white privilege,' white national ists counter that white people are no longer conquerors but victims." (p. 109-110)

[227] Nonetheless, it is crucial to emphasize that not all "left-wing" movements endorse the practices of "antifa." Furthermore, despite claims by some Republican legislators that the Democrats support "antifa," the actions of "Antifa" are not widely accepted, and even condemned, within the Democratic Party (Speckhard, 2020).

[228] Regrettably, offering a concise yet comprehensive overview of the myriad concepts mentioned here, like I did with "terrorism" and "war," would undoubtedly lead to an endless dissertation. It is crucial to acknowledge that I am aware that these terms, including others referenced throughout this dissertation—such as "democracy," "justice," "state," "citizen," "individual," "violence," and more—each merit meticulous and critical examination. Scholars in various fields, including philosophy, sociology, political science, international relations, among others, have extensively delved into these subjects, and they still do. Recognizing the limitations of this work, I must admit that I occasionally have to resort to shortcuts and readily available assumptions. Nonetheless, this acknowledgment serves as a personal reminder of the need to devote time to thoughtful contemplation on these complex matters in the future.

In recent times, particularly during the administrations of Presidents Trump and Biden, "left-wing" and "right-wing" terminologies have been *conjured* (Haddock-Lobo, 2011) and associated to movements which, in turn, have garnered significant public attention as they emerged as focal points of political manifestation. Consequently, these movements have also drawn the focus and scrutiny of these administrations, especially because they have been linked to "terrorism," "domestic terrorism," "violent extremism" and "unlawful activity" (The White House, 2021a; National Security Council, 2021).

Even though Trump and Biden's administrations are the first to come to mind when we think about "left-wing" and "right-wing" condemnations, as Viana and Silva (2021) remind us, the Obama administration witnessed the development of strategic initiatives by various agencies – including the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of Justice (DoJ), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) – aimed at the prevention and mitigation of what come to be known as "violent extremisms." Consequently, during the Obama years, "terrorism" has remained embedded within the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" (also) operating under the nomenclature of "violent extremism." More specifically, the Obama administration defined that "violent extremist threats can come from a range of groups and individuals, including domestic terrorists and homegrown violent extremists in the United States, as well as terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and ISIL." (The White House, 2015, n.p.)

In this sense, these initiatives underscored the primary objective of proactively preventing "violent extremism" and, when prevention proved unattainable, implementing countermeasures to disrupt "its" life cycles. And, with regard to this scenario, Viana and Silva (2021, p. 37) assert that it would be possible to observe an expansion of the "War on Terror very institutional fabric." That is, according to the authors, because of previous diagnoses of the "War on Terror" failures, the Obama administration resorted to a reorientation departing from an exclusive militarized focus on the suppression and neutralization of "terrorism" and adding "violent extremism" as a means to "preventing extremisms [and] taming dissidence" (Viana and Silva, 2021).

Indeed, concerning the issue of "violent extremisms," this *apparent* expansion facilitated the framing of protests led by "antifa" and movements such

as "Occupy"[229] and the "Black Lives Matter."[230] For example, many of those who protested and called into question the circumstances involving the deaths of George Floyd[231] and Breonna Taylor[232], were labeled as dangerous. In so being, they have been portrayed as "threats" to law enforcement agencies, to their personnel, and to "national security" itself. Consequently, they were categorized as "violent extremisms" or "black extremisms" This characterization has, in turn, facilitated the exercise of police force and other excesses (Hill et al, 2020; Viana and Silva, 2021; Waldrop et al, 2022). In the same vein, it also allowed for, in the following years, an attention to "racially motivated extremisms," including those of "white supremacists," "Proud boys,"[233] "Boogaloos,"[234] and so forth (Viana and Silva, 2021; Speckhard, 2020; FBI, 2023).[235]

Also, the Brennan Center for Justice (2019) underscores that "countering violent extremism" programs are based on flawed notion: that there is an easily identifiable, clear-cut process of "radicalization" and that it necessarily culminates

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[229] See, for example: Fletcher, Samantha. 2014. The Occupy movement. In Maile, Stella; Griffiths David. Public Engagement and Social Science. 2014. Bristol: Policy Press.

[230] See, for example: Black Lives Matter <https://blacklivesmatter.com/>; and Lebron, Christopher J. The Making of Black Lives Matter: A Brief History of an Idea. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

[231] George Floyd, a 46-year-old black man, was apprehended by the Minneapolis police following a call from a local convenience store. During his detention, Floyd was immobilized by three police officers and exhibited no vital signs, as he was rendered unable to breathe. On his death, see: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/31/us/george-floyd-investigation.html>.

[232] Breonna Taylor, a 26-year-old African American woman, was killed during a police raid in her apartment in Kentucky, in 2020. When the officers forcibly entered her apartment, her boyfriend, Kenneth Walker III, fired a shot, believing they were intruders. In response, the police returned fire, and Breonna Taylor was fatally shot multiple times. The case garnered significant attention and led to protests and calls for justice due to concerns about the use of no-knock warrants and allegations of excessive force (CNN, 2022).

[233] The "Proud Boys" was founded in 2016 by Gaving McInnes, a Canadian-British. Their platform includes ideas such as: "glorify the entrepreneur and close the border;" "give everyone a gun;" "end welfare;" and "venerate the housewife." (Wendling, 2020). See, for example: Jensen, Michael, Elizabeth Yates, and Sheehan Kane. 2022. Proud Boys Crimes and Characteristics. College Park, MD: START (January). Available at: <https://www.start.umd.edu/sites/default/files/publications/local_attachments/Proud%20Boy%20Crimes%20and%20Characteristics%20January%202022%20FINAL.pdf>; and CISAC. 2023. Proud Boys. Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC). Standford University. Available at: <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/proud-boys

[234] According to Speckhard (2020), the "Boogaloos" also identify with "white supremacism" and aim for a "second civil war." For more information on this group, see, for example. Thompson, Jared. Boogaloo Movement. Center for International and Strategic Studies. Available at: <https://www.csis.org/blogs/examining-extremism/examining-extremism-boogaloo-movement>.

[235] As I show in Chapter 2, if we access the FBI page on "terrorism," it offers definitions for "international terrorism" and "domestic terrorism". As for the latter, it states that "Domestic terrorism: Violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature." (FBI, 2023, n.p.).

in “terrorist violence.” This “fundamental” premise stems from the idea that “extremist ideologies” embark on a linear path that inevitably leads to “terrorism.” However, the Brennan Center for Justice (2019) reminds us, there are only vague indicators and that they hold little or no predictive value. Be that as it may, “countering violent extremism” initiatives disproportionately focus on minorities despite the ongoing menace of “far-right” movements. Also, it is worth highlighting that a significant 85 percent of “CVE grants” issued during the Trump administration explicitly aimed at minority groups, encompassing “Muslims,” “LGBTQIA+,” “Black Lives Matter activists,” “immigrants,” and “refugees” (Brennan Center for Justice, 2019)

However, I must stress that differently from Viana and Silva (2010), I understand that only an *apparent* expansion of the “Wars on Terrors very institutional fabric” took place in the last years. By saying apparent, I do not mean that nothing “changed” or impacted many lives and political demands. On the contrary, I mean that *things* were, at best, re-arranged, re-named, re-iterated. For, as we already observed in previous chapters, I cannot talk about a “War on Terror;” rather, I observe the existence of “Wars on Terrors” that rely on asymmetric iterable structure, that did not have an origin on September 11, 2001, and wherein the USA resorting to its military apparatus to “counter terrorism” did not exclude resorting to aims of preventing “violent extremisms.” This way, I do not conceive the U.S. administrations focus on “violent extremisms” as an expansion of the “War on Terror” agenda, but as an-*other* manifestation of the U.S. “Wars on Terrors.”

In this sense, on the one hand, indeed, the United States has persistently leveraged its military apparatus in the pursuit of “countering terrorism,” as Guantánamo Bay remains open, border walls keep being erected, military personnel continue to be deployed elsewhere to promote and spread “freedom, democracy, justice and equality” – whatever they might be. On the other hand, however, and as already underscored in section 4.3.2., the fear of “domestic terrorism” or “violent extremism” precedes recent administrations. It is not, then, a recent expansion. The FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin of 1999, for example, pays especial attention to “them,” as it expressly says that:

> Domestic terrorism involves groups or individuals who operate without foreign direction entirely within the United States and target elements of the U.S.

> government or citizens. Domestic terrorist groups represent extreme right-wing, extreme left-wing, and special interest beliefs. The major themes espoused today by extremist rightwing groups include conspiracies regarding the New World Order, gun control laws, the approach of the millennium, and white supremacy. Many of these extremist groups also advocate antigovernment, antitaxation, or antiabortion sentiments and engage in survivalist training to ensure the perpetuation of the United States as a white, Christian nation […] Left-wing extremist groups generally profess a revolutionary socialist doctrine and view themselves as protectors of the American people against capitalism and imperialism. They aim to change the United States through revolutionary means rather than participating in the established political process. During the last 3 decades, leftist-oriented extremist groups had posed the predominant domestic terrorist threat in the United States. Beginning in the 1980s, however, the FBI dismantled many of these groups by arresting key members for their criminal activities. The transformation of the former Soviet Union also deprived many leftist groups of a coherent ideology or spiritual patron. As a result, membership and support for these groups has declined. Special-interest terrorist groups differ from extreme left- and rightwing terrorist groups because members of these groups seek to resolve specific interests rather than pursue widespread political changes. Members of such groups include animal rights advocates, supporters of environmental issues, and antiabortion advocates (LEB, 1999, p. 5-6).

Notably, in the aforementioned document, as well as in recent years, the categorization of "extreme right-wing" and "extreme left-wing" groups have been woven into the fabric of "domestic terrorism," and attributed to their propagation of "conspiracy narratives" surrounding themes such as "gun control legislation," "white supremacy," "anti-taxation advocacy," "anti-abortion sentiments," "capitalism," "socialism," "imperialism," among others[236]. Consequently, the entanglement of "right-wing extremism," "left-wing extremism" and "domestic terrorism" does not represent a 21st century novelty. Rather, as we can observe in the 1999 LEB, these "groups" were and still are presented as equivalent, as they would engage in "violent, unlawful activities" and in pressuring various sectors of society to amend their perspectives on issues they consider pivotal. This way, when rendered equivalent and juxtaposed, both were acknowledged as prospective "threats" that attacked or could attack and harm the USA "at some point in the future" (LEB, 1999, p. 6).

In the same vein, if we go back to Bonditti (2014), it is possible to observe that the association of "left-wing groups" and "right-wing groups" to "terrorism" is not something new. Rather, the FBI's definition of "terrorism" during the 1980s

[236] See, also, the FBI Records regarding "Black Extremism" at: < https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/cointel-pro-black-extremists>.

already relied on the "international/domestic" divide, in which "domestic terrorism" was directly linked to "right-wing"[237] and "left-wing"[238] manifestations[239] (U.S. Department of Justice, 1987). This way, the 1987 definitions of "domestic terrorism" [240] brought in the document "*Terrorism in the United States"* emphasize not only the damage "terrorism" inflicted in people's lives, but also to goods and property (Bonditti, 2014). More than that, these definitions paved the way for the next years, where those who protested for "animal rights," "civil rights," "refugee rights," and many others were frequently labeled as "terrorists".

Also, although there is this widespread idea that that "white supremacism returned to mainstream politics" (Clarck, 2020), and that "racial demands" and "antifa" is something recent, we could go even further back, and take the "Black Panther Party" (BPP)[241] (1966-1986) and the "Ku Klux Klan" (KKK) as examples

[237] "No terrorist incidents were attributed to right-wing terrorists in 1987. During the past few years, more than 50 members of groups, such as the Aryan Nations and its offshoot, the Order; the Covenant, the Sword, the Arm of the Lord; the White Patriot Party; and the Committee of States, have been arrested, tried, and convicted for their criminal terrorist activities. These activities have included murders, armed robberies, bombings, counterfeiting, and weapons and explosives violations. In addition, 15 persons, some of whom were already in prison, were indicted by Federal grand juries in April, 1987, for seditious conspiracy to overthrow the U.S. Government and/or other charges. Even though the U.S. Government has been successful against right-wing terrorism, their organizational infrastructures have not been completely dismantled. There is a potential for renewed terrorist activity for the foreseeable future." (USA Department of Justice, 1987, p. 31).

[238] "Although no terrorist incidents were attributed to left-wing terrorist groups in the united states during 1987, this segment continues to pose a threat. The arrests of leaders and key members of groups, such as the United Freedom Front (UFF), during the past few years have minimized their potential to engage in terrorist activities. Nearly a dozen left-wing terrorists have been tried and convicted of various crimes during the past two years and more trials are pending. There remain, however, a number of supporters and associates of those who have been arrested. These individuals are believed to hold similar views and, given the right circumstances, could become the next generation of terrorists. Domestic left-wing terrorism in the United States has historically been cyclical. There have been periods of terrorist violence, followed by arrests and prosecutions, followed by a regrouping stage. The cycle then starts anew. Left-wing terrorism in the united states currently appears to be in the regrouping stage." (USA Department of Justice, 1987, p. 31).

[239] Also, as Bonditti (2014) aptly reminds us, "Other targets included ethnically-based groups (African-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Jews, later on Armenians and Croats) and any other group that might pursue its objectives by violent means." (p. 202).

[240] "The groups characterized as domestic terrorists elements are those indigenous to the United States and Puerto Rico. The objectives of these groups, which are represented by both left-wing and right-wing interests, are to bring about a change in the existing American social and political environment through violent means" (US Department of Justice, 1987, p. 31).

[241] According to the African American Heritage, the Black Panthers Party foundational directives were: "We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community. We want full employment for our people. We want an end to the robbery by the Capitalists of our Black Community. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present day society. We want all Black men to be exempt from military service. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER

(Bray, 2017). The BPP was organized around "black nationalism, socialism, and armed self-defense, particularly against police brutality" (African American Heritage, 2021)[242], "a multifaceted association of American citizens who […] did not believe in pleading, begging, praying, or patiently waiting for equal rights to be conferred" (Allen-Bell, 2014). It also worked to provide food for school children, health care for those who could have sickle cell anemia, legal aid, as well as adult education. However, because of resorting to "armed self-defense" and to "communist" and "revolutionary" ideas, the BPP was targeted by the FBI and other law enforcement groups. According to the FBI Records (1969-1976), the BPP was a "black extremist organization [which] advocated the use of violence and guerrilla tactics to overthrow the U.S. government." Chow (2021) also shows they have been named "terrorists," "fringe separatists," "wild beasts" and "the civil rights movement's evil twin." (n.p.).

The Ku Klux Klan, on the other hand, was formed in 1865 by "white vigilantes" who targeted "Jews," "Roman Catholics," and "aliens." More than that, its members engaged in what Allen-Bell (2016) calls a "terror campaign" against minorities, especially the black population. This "group" does not have a continuous history, however. On the contrary, its manifestations are identified in moments such as the beginning of the 20th century and the 1920s[243]. Also, in the late 1960s, a group called "Knights of the Ku Klux Klan," i.e. KKKK, founded by David Duke, claimed to be a "modern white civil rights organization" (Southern

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of Black people. We want freedom for all Black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails. We want all Black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their Black Communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace." (2021, n.p.)

[242] As per the African American Heritage (2021) and Allen-Bell (2014; 2016), the Black Panther Party emerged as a pivotal constituent of the "Black Power movement," distinctly departing from the integrationist objectives and nonviolent protest methodologies championed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The BPP's principles were deeply rooted in the contributions of Malcolm X thinking, Mao Tse-Tung, and Frantz Fanon. Furthermore, the BPP's use of "armed self-defense" found inspiration in the African American activist Robert Williams, who promoted this approach as a means of countering anti-Black aggression by the "Ku Klux Klan," as documented in his work "Negroes with Guns" (1962).

[243] According to Allen-Bell (2016), by the year 1920, the "KKK" resurfaced. Boasting a claimed membership of millions, its presence remained predominantly concentrated in the Southern and Southwestern regions of the USA. During this period, Allen-Bell highlights the "KKK" targeted "Catholics," "Jews," "Black people" and "aliens" Notably, during the 1920 "another" Ku Klux Klan emerged in attempting to revive the supposedly "original white supremacist organization" from the 19th century. This time, it claimed to have 5 million members and exerted control over hundreds of elected officials and wielded influence over several state legislatures. Later, in 1944, the "KKK" effectively faced a temporary dissolution, as its charter was revoked.

Poverty Law Center, 2023, n.p.). The FBI (n.d.) has also published a "KKK series," and pledges to pay attention to the "KKK" in order to protect "American people – especially minorities – from the evils of the modern-day Klan." Also, similarly to "antifa" whose actions become more apparent in times of "fascist" insurgency, "white supremacists" such as members of the "KKK" or the "KKKK" expand during moments of what Bray (2017) calls "black social advancement," such as the election of the first "Black" President of the USA, in 2008.

Although differences among these "groups" may seem extreme and even obvious to some of us, not everyone seem to focus on them. Rather, they focus on the "BPP" and the "KKK" (and the "KKKK"), as well as on "left-wing" and "right-wing" groups "extreme behaviors," the use of "violence as a means" and "vigilantism." In so doing, through an "incongruous intersection," they are compared and equally condemned[244] (Allen-Bell, 2016). Furthermore, the categorization of the aforementioned "groups" within the purview of "extremism" indicate they could both be regarded as entities espousing "political, religious […] ideas or actions that are extreme and not normal, reasonable or acceptable to most people" (Oxford Learners Dictionary, 2023, n.p.).

John Avlon (2014), for example, characterizes both "right-wing extremist" and "left-wing extremist" groups as "wingnuts," that is, as groups that "advocate extreme measures or changes (as in politics)" (Merriam-Webster, 2023, n.p.). Avlon (2014) contends that these movements exhibit nebulous boundaries, thereby inducing bewilderment, as they recurrently surface throughout American political history, marked by fervent exaggeration, pervasive suspicion, and the propagation of conspiratorial narratives. Also, Avlon (2014) asserts that "wingnuts" have historically operated under various names and guises, yet consistently adhering to oppositions of "us against them," fomenting intergroup animosities under the guise of political and purportedly principled agendas. Their *modus operandi*, the author believes, is grounded in the exploitation of fear and the perpetuation of ignorance (2023, p. 24).

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[244] Allen-Bell (2016) shows us that in 2015, for example, a prison warden from Louisiana equated the BPP and the KKK, and that a Georgia Republican Representative, Tommy Benton, declared that the KKK was neither a "racist" nor a "terrorist" organization; rather, a group of vigilantes dedicated to maintaining law and order, and that has "made a lot of people straighten up" See more about these declarations at: <https://www.newsweek.com/gop-representative-who-defended-kkk-appointed-georgia-house-committee-1298197>.

In 2017, individuals identifying themselves as “white nationalists” and “white supremacists” congregated in the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville to demonstrate against the removal of the statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Their presence sparked “antifa” counter-protests, and tensions escalated when James Alex Fields Jr. drove his car into a crowd of counter-protesters, resulting in one fatality and at least 35 individuals sustaining injuries. The subsequent clashes between “protesters” and “counter-protesters” prompted the governor of Virginia to declare a “state of emergency” (ADL, 2017). In response, then President Trump, in a short statement, condemned what happened. However, he condemned both “protesters” and “counter-protesters” equally, for he underscored that “we condemn in the strongest possible terms this egregious display of hatred, bigotry and violence on many sides, on many sides […] It has no place in America” (Trump, 2017, apud CNN, 2017, n.p.).

However, ADL (2017), while recognizing that “antifa” resorts to unacceptable methods – that is, the use of violence –, underscores that this kind of comparison consist in a false equivalency, for it posits “antifa” as just as bad as “fascists” and “white supremacists.” Likewise, Speckhard (2020) and Rothman (2018) assert that “antifa” involvement in violent actions is predominantly aimed at “far-right” and “white nationalist” demonstrators, exemplified by their confrontations with groups akin to those involved in the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville. Moreover, “antifa” participates in demonstrations against speakers with “far-right” affiliations at academic institutions and intervenes in parades designed to commemorate “far-right ideologies.” Put simply, “antifa” manifest themselves in response to “fascism.” According to this perspective, “antifa wouldn’t exist if there weren’t these fascist and far-right groups mobilizing and carrying out attacks” (Hill, 2018, apud Rothman, 2018, n.p.).

Along the same lines, during the “Mostly Peaceful: Countering Left-Wing Organized Violence” hearing[245][246], Daniel Byman (2023, n.p.)[247] emphasized that

[245] This hearing took place on May, 2023 and Daniel Byman’s statement was submitted to the House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security’s Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Accountability. To read his whole statement, access: < https://www.brookings.edu/articles/countering-organized-violence-in-the-united-states/>.

[246] To watch it, access: < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSeMi_MMThY>.

[247] Daniel Byman is a Director and Professor in the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University. He is also a Senior Fellow at “Foreign Policy” and at the “Center for Middle East Policy.”

the use of the terms “left-wing” or “right-wing” to describe political violence can inadvertently or deliberately blur the distinction between “extremist activities” and the “legitimate actions” of political activists. In a similar vein, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) (2017) underscores the unfairness of equating “antifa” with “white supremacists” by highlighting that “white supremacists” employ even more extreme violence to propagate their hateful ideologies, intimidate ethnic minorities, and undermine democratic norms. As for the ADL (2017), “they” have been responsible for hundreds of deaths in the United States over the past decade, while no “antifa-related murders” have been documented.

It is important to remember that “antifa” is not restricted to the USA and does not consist of a coherent group with clearly defined affiliations, a well-defined plan of action, or a list of membership (Hill, 2018; Bray, 2017; Speckhard, 2020; Bogel-Burroughs and Garcia, 2020; ADL, 2021). On the contrary, as Mark Bray (2017, p. xv) demonstrates, “Some antifa groups are more Marxist while others are more anarchist or antiauthoritarian.” Furthermore, in the context of the USA, “most have been anarchist or antiauthoritarian since the emergence of modern antifa under the name Anti-Racist Action (ARA) in the late eighties” (p. xv)[248]. Similarly, Gord Hill (2018), in an interview to Rothman (2018, n.p.), asserts that “Anti-fascist resistance movements arise out of actual material conditions, like being attacked by fascist gangs and paramilitary groups, so it’s a self-defense response from a lot of different

[248] According to Bray (2017, p. 66-67), “we can locate its North American emergence in a Minneapolis pizza parlor where a crew of multiracial, antiracist skinheads called the Baldies were gathered over Christmas break in December 1987. Earlier in the year, a local group that sported Nazi insignia and called themselves the White Knights started to terrorize African Americans and threaten leftists. The Baldies decided to fight back. A black skinhead in their crew named Mike threw a brick through the window of the White Knight leader’s house; he was arrested and fined two hundred dollars. Deciding to put more thought into their strategy, the Baldies huddled together over pizza to chart a course forward. While reading British anarchist periodicals like Class War and Black Flag, a sixteen-year-old Baldie named Kieran had learned about the newly formed Anti-Fascist Action. Tales of physically confronting the white power ‘Fronters’ spoke to these young skinheads, but the word fascism ‘sounded like a dogmatic leftist term’ in the American political climate. As a result, the Baldies decided to call their new formation Anti-Racist Action (ARA). In their first newsletter, ARA described its activities as: 1) Education: leaflets, stickers, posters, letters, zines. 2) Direct action: spray paint, crowbars, bricks. 3) Confrontation: your decision.” (p. 66-67). Also, years later, “as ARA thus spread across the United States, Canadian antiracist skinheads fought back against Aryan Nations violence in Edmonton by forming the Anti-Fascist League in 1990” (p. 70-71). More recently, we can observe the existence of “what is currently the oldest existing antifa group in the United States: Rose City Antifa (RCA) in Portland, Oregon. Founded in 2007 out of an organizing drive against the neo-Nazi skinhead festival Hammerfest, RCA was heavily influenced by the high number of Europeans in their group, reflected in the fact that they were the first American group to name itself ‘antifa.” (p. 107). See more at: Bray, Mark. 2017. Antifa: The Anti-Fascist Handbook. New York: Melville House Publishing.

communities, including the leftist groups — and today it's the immigrant communities; people of color; lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people." In this sense, "antifascists" would be those who act in (self-) defense of "immigrants," "people of color," "LGBTQIA+" and all those who, somehow, become the target of "fascist, supremacist" violence and respond to it. As a consequence, additionally for being linked to a "left-wing" position, "antifa" commonly is associated to "signifiers" such as those of "activism," "activist," "vigilance," and "vigilante," as they pledge to resist oppression, hate and institutions that enable them (Speckhard, 2020). The play of endless supplementarity goes on.

However, in a similar vein, the "antifa" are demonized by "right," and "far-right" movements (Rothman, 2018). The Proud Boys, for example – "an all-male, far-right […] Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, homophobic, transphobic, misogynistic, and xenophobic" group (CISAC, 2023) – allege their existence is due to a need to elevate "masculinity," oppose "Islam" and defend its community of a "war on whites." (CISAC, 2023). To become a member, they declare: "I am a Western chauvinist and I refuse to apologize for creating the modern world." (CISAC, 2023, n.p.). In this sense, differently from "antifa," some "white supremacist" groups like the "Proud Boys" resort to rituals, hierarchies and membership[249].

Jason Stanley (2020, p. 14-16) highlights that, as per him, "fascism" is a label intimately linked to "ultranationalism," "political division" wherein a "nation" is represented by an authoritarian leader who claims to speak on their behalf and against an "other." The author exemplifies this scenario mentioning former President Donald Trump who declared in 2016, to his electorate: "I am your voice." More than that, the author underscores "fascism" relies on some elements, those being: a "mythic past" used to maintain or to promote a desired picture of the

[249] According to CISAC (2023), there are degrees of membership which serve as a symbol of its members allegiance to the group. The higher their hank, the more respectful and trustful a member is considered. In this sense, "to attain the first degree, members must publicly declare: 'I am a Western chauvinist and I refuse to apologize for creating the modern world.' Reaching the second degree of membership involves getting repeatedly punched until members can recite five kinds of breakfast cereal. According to Yosef Ozia, a member of the Southern Proud Boys chapter in Atlanta, Georgia, this step in the initiation process has no real significance and originated from the following nonsensical rule that McInnes and his friends had in the past: 'if someone farted, they'd get beat on until they could list five kinds of breakfast cereal.' Second-degree members are also required to adhere to the group's masturbation policy, which restricts members from masturbating more than once a month. To progress to the third level, members must get a Proud Boys logo tattoo. Members achieve the highest level of status once they engage in violence on the group's behalf, such as assaulting a left-wing activist." (2023, n.p.).

"present;" "propaganda," which promotes anti-intellectualism, conspiracies and twists some ideals while reinforcing others; "sexual anxiety," which allows for misogynistic patriarchal, LGBTQIA+phobic behaviors; the naturalization of "group difference," rendering this supposedly differences natural, and scientific; and an appeal to "law and order," wherein "we" are lawful, normal citizens, and "they" are lawless, abnormal aliens. In this sense, it is possible to think of "antifa" as a response, an opposition to "fascism" and other "-isms" it invokes, such as "white supremacism," and "racism" (Bray, 2017; Allen-Bell, 2014, 2016; Rothman, 2018).

However, as previously shown, these "groups" not only appear to be consistently equated, but also connected to a "racialized terror" – i.e., to "terrorism" – in the USA (LEB, 1999; Allen-Bell, 204, 2016; Bray, 2017; Viana and Silva, 2021; FBI, 2023). And "why linking both of them to 'terrorism' would be a problem?" or "why linking 'white supremacism' to 'terrorism' would be a problem?" one might ask. As I demonstrate in the following lines, labeling movements and some people who demand political, gender, social and economic justice as "terrorist" or as "violent extremists" result in material policies, i.e., on "Wars on Terrors" in the shape of detentions, bans and deaths. Also, in the case of "fascism," "white supremacism," and "racism," it allows for diversions that hurt people of color the most (Hager, 2021; Shamas and Ismail, 2021).

Wertheim (2020) reminds us that when "Black Lives Matter" – and I would add "antifa" – counter-protests took place, then President Trump regarded their actions as a "threat to the USA" on par with an "external invasion." In so doing, the Trump administration linked the "black population" demands to "foreign threats." As he declared, their kind of behavior had "no place in America" (Trump, 2017, apud CNN, 2017, n.p.). However, it is important to bear in mind that the discourse of that administration had already been in the making since its first electoral campaign (Gamboa, 2015; Bray, 2017), as Donald Trump claimed constantly that Barack Obama was not a "true America," but a "foreign-born:" "President Barack Obama was not born in the United States, period" (Trump, 2016, apud The Associated Press, 2016, n.p.). The "foreigner," whether "African-Americans," in general, or a "Black" President, in particular, was presented as an-*other* who could subvert the "nation." This way, the vocabulary Wertheim (2020, n.p.) considers as belonging to "the war on terror" burst into "domestic life." In this scenario, "racial"

demands, in places like Portland, and Chicago, were attributed to a "beehive of terrorists" that hated the USA and constituted a bigger menace than "Afghanistan" (Trump, 2020, apud Holland, 2020, n.p.), that should be fought, according to former President Trump, by the "National Guard" with tear-gas, and with brutal force, as he considered that "when the looting starts, the shooting starts"[250] (Trump, 2020 apud Wertheim, 2020, n.p.).

More than that, despite claiming numerous times he is "the last racist person you have ever met" (apud Baker, 2019; apud Bray, 2017), President Trump never distanced himself from former "KKKK" leader David Duke; characterized undocumented "im/migrants" as "rapists"; and shared, countless times, "anti-Semitic," "anti-Muslim," "white supremacist" memes, as well as fabricated data on "foreign" criminality (Bray, 2017). These *textiles* allowed for the mobilization of anger against "Black people," "Muslims," "Middle Easterners," "South Asians," "Latinos," "im/migrants," "refugees," "feminists," "LGBTQIA+," and many supplements of the "terrorizing other" (Bray, 2017).

They also allowed for social media spreading of all kinds of posts[251] which tied together groups such as ISIS, "Black Lives Matter," "antifa" to people like President Barack Obama. As Alund (2020) exemplifies, in March 2020, a Facebook user, Kathie Wilcox Gilmore, posted: "Before Obama we had no ISIS! Before Obama we had no BLM! Before Obama we had no ANTIFA! Before Obama we had no war on cops!" (n.p.). However, a quick search can show us that ISIS history, for example, can be observed previously, at least 2004, as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi declared its beginning (Napoleoni, 2015); "Black Lives Matter" came to life in 2013

[250] According to Wertheim (2020), this sentence, tweeted by Trump, is a "word-for-word echo of segregationists" (n.p.). This sentence dates back to the 1960s, a period of political unrest. The expression gained prominence through its usage by Walter E. Headley, a former police chief of Miami, in 1967, as he vowed "no-holds-barred" reaction to a surge in violent crime during the Christmas season, particularly in black neighborhoods. (Wine, 2020).

[251] There are many examples. As the ADL (2017, n.p.) shows us: "during the summer of 2020, disinformation was widely shared on social media which alleged that antifa was trying to use Black Lives Matter protests as cover to act violently, that they were planning violent attacks on white suburbs, and that they were working with Muslim groups to impose Shariah law (in three respective disinformation campaigns)." Also, "there was […] a fake antifa manual that was widely circulated, conspiracies connecting George Soros to BLM protests and antifa, and disinformation that antifa hosted a 4th of July 'flag burning event.'" Finally, "This tendency was amplified in the wake of the January 6th Capitol insurrection, as almost immediately false claims surfaced that antifa was the first to storm the Capitol – not pro-Trump extremists. These allegations were spread even by mainstream right-wing media personalities who falsely claimed that there were reports of busloads of antifa infiltrating the ranks of the pro-Trump crowd and that it was antifa that was the first to break the police barrier."

(Lebron, 2017), but did not come out of nowhere, as "Anti-Racist Action" and the "Black Panthers Party" had similar agendas and took action in the second half of the 20th century (Bray, 2017); and "antifa" also had expressions in many places since the first half of the 20th century (ADL, 2017; Bray, 2017; Speckhard, 2020).

Regarding the protests that took place in May 2020 and directed their claims to the circumstances of the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, for example, President Trump, in a tweet[252], indicated his intent to label the "antifa" protesters as part of a "domestic terrorist group." However, as noted by Speckhard (2020) and Perez and Hoffman (2020), the authority to do so lied not with the President of the USA but with the U.S. State Department. Despite this, the Trump administration did maintain this position and also threatened to invoke the intention to potentially invoke the "Insurrection Act of 1807"[253][254] which states that:

> [I]n all cases of insurrection, or obstruction to the laws, either of the United States, or of any individual state or territory, where it is lawful for the President of the United States to call forth the militia for the purpose of suppressing such insurrection, or of causing the laws to be duly executed, it shall be lawful for him to employ, for the same purposes, such part of the land or naval force of the United States, as shall be judged necessary, having first observed all the pre-requisites of the law in that respect. (Insurrection Act of 1807, ch. 39).

Notwithstanding the drafting of a proclamation (Schmidt and Haberman, 2021), the Trump administration refrained from invoking the "Insurrection Act." However, concurrent with these contemplations of military intervention, the suggestions of classifying "antifa" as a "terrorist organization" ignored the fact that "antifa" lacks a formal organizational structure, and the United States lacked legislation explicitly categorizing "domestic terrorism" (Axios, 2020; Bogel-Burroughs and Garcia, 2020). This course of action was not promptly executed;

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[252] Former President Trump tweeted, on May 31, 2020 "The United States of America will be designating ANTIFA as a Terrorist Organization." (Trump, 2020, n.p.).

[253] In a similar vein, the "US Code 2383 - Rebellion or insurrection" establishes that "Whoever incites, sets on foot, assists, or engages in any rebellion or insurrection against the authority of the United States or the laws thereof, or gives aid or comfort thereto, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than ten years, or both; and shall be incapable of holding any office under the United States" (n.p.).

[254] Also on a tweet, on May 31, 2020, President Trump said "Get tough Democrat Mayors and Governors. These people are ANARCHISTS. Call in our National Guard NOW. The World is watching and laughing at you and Sleepy Joe. Is this what America wants? NO!!!" (Trump, 2020b, n.p.).

however, during Donald Trump's final days as President, on January 5, 2021, a memorandum titled *Memorandum on Inadmissibility of Persons Affiliated with Antifa Based on Organized Criminal Activity* was issued. This memorandum explicitly asserted that "The Department of Justice has already publicly confirmed that actions by Antifa and similar groups meet the standard for domestic terrorism" (The White House, 2021, n.p.), thereby establishing the "Inadmissibility of Antifa Associates Based on Terrorist and Unlawful Activity." (n.p.).

Interestingly, even if we resorted to widely accepted definitions of "terrorism," such as those which define it as coming from "organized, non-governmental groups," "antifa" could not be labeled "terrorist." For, as already demonstrated, it is more a "set of ideas and behaviors" than an "organized group" *per se*. It lacks a membership list, hierarchies, official headquarters, financing mechanisms and even a leader (Speckhard, 2020; Tucker and Fox, 2020). Also, as Viana and Silva (2021) show, during the Trump administration, the "Counterterrorism Division" of the FBI released assessments[255] regarding "Black Identity Extremism", in 2018, and "racially motivated violent extremism," in 2019. These assessments circulated among law enforcement personnel and helped to target suspects of this kind of "extremism" – through surveillance, secrecy, detention (Vedaschi and Graziani, 2023) and brutal excesses and retaliations (Shamas and Ismail, 2020). This way, even if since 2003 the Department of Justice – of which the FBI is "the principal investigative arm" (FBI, n.d., n.p.) – pledged that "racial profiling" was wrong and must had come to an end; and even if the Department of Homeland Security "Homeland Threat Assessment" (2020, p. 4) expressed that, regarding "domestic terrorism" there was a more urgent concern "about white supremacist violent extremists who have been exceptionally lethal in their abhorrent, targeted attacks in recent years," "antifa" – and their supplements – were treated as the most "persistent and lethal threat."

Placing excessive focus on "antifa" provided pretexts to dismiss concerns and grievances of protesters, while granting law enforcement personnel validation to employ physical force, to use tear-gas and pepper spray, to use rubber bullets

[255] See, for example, the leaked copy of the FBI Strategy Guide FY2018-20 and Threat Guidance For Racial Extremists." Available at: <https://pt.scribd.com/document/421166393/FBI-Strategy-Guide-FY2018-20-and-Threat-Guidance-for-Racial-Extremists>. See, also German, Michael. 2020. The FBI Targets a New Generation of Black Activists, at: <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/fbi-targets-new-generation-black-activists>.

against crowds of *mostly* nonviolent people, rendering claims that "racism, white supremacy, and far-right militancy" would be "hidden in plain sight [...] in Law Enforcement" (German, 2020). It also provided pretext to assert that "antifa" was a matter of concern, a "threat," a primary issue of "national security," rather than addressing underlying social injustices, police brutality, and systemic racism that persist in the United States. Consequently, labeling "antifa" as a "domestic terrorist group" constituted a tactic of diversion, a way to avoid paying attention to injustices and to avoid addressing the existence of "violent extremisms" whether they came from protestors or from law enforcement (Speckhard, 2020).

President Biden's campaign and current administration emphasized themes of renewal and unity, and, regarding "terrorism," we can observe a focus on "countering domestic terrorism" – see chapter 2. Contrary to the former administration, however, "domestic terrorism" refers, in Biden's Presidency, broadly to "far-right extremism" and "white supremacy" (Speckhard and Ellenberg, 2021; Vedaschi and Graziani, 2023) and this focus is commonly connected with events such as the January 6, 2021, Capitol Building assault, which was promptly labeled "domestic terrorism."

Still-in-office Donald Trump recognized the invaders of the Capitol Hill were "true Patriots" with a natural response for the "unfair" election of Joe Biden; however, elected not-yet-in-office Joe Biden declared: "They weren't protesters. Don't dare call them protesters. They were a riotous mob, insurrectionists, domestic terrorists. It's that basic. It's that simple." (Biden apud NBC, 2021, n.p.). This way, according to Vedaschi and Graziani (2023), this "domestic terrorism" became the Biden Presidency "main enemy."

Accordingly, in 2021, President Joe Biden introduced the *National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism*, in order to express a commitment to addressing this "domestic threat." Its aforementioned pillars – see chapter 2 – place special attention to "terrorism-related information-sharing;" to "preventing domestic terrorism recruitment" as well as any kind of "mobilization to violence" especially online; to the uncontrolled access of assault weapons; to the disruption and detention of "domestic terrorists;" and to the confrontation of those committed to "domestic terrorism" for a long time, so that potential "feeders of extreme and violent behaviors" do not act.

In this context, proposals for new legislation (bills) were presented by supporters of President Biden in Congress. Notable among these proposals was the "*Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act*," [256] initially put forth in 2021 by Democratic Representative Bradley Scott Schneider and endorsed by over 200 co-sponsors, then reintroduced in 2023 (Vedaschi and Graziani, 2023, p. 217; US Senate Committee on the Judiciary, 2023). Another significant proposal was the "*Domestic Terrorism and Hate Crimes Prevention Act*," [257] introduced in 2021 by Democratic Senator Richard Durbin (p. 218). Even though they had not become a law – at least yet – it is important to note that both of these bills aimed at improving the legal framework surrounding "domestic terrorism" by enhancing information-sharing among government agencies and bolstering law enforcement's authority to monitor and investigate "potential terrorist threats."

Both in Trump's (2017) condemnation of "antifa" and in Biden's (2021a; 2021d) condemnation of "white supremacists," we may observe the previously mentioned ideas of Schmitt's *foe* and of Koselleck's asymmetrical iterable counterconceptual relations (Schmitt, 2005, 2007, 2011; Koselleck, 2004, 2018). And why is that? Because by being considered the absolute, outlaw, exceptional, asymmetrical "enemies of humanity" – and the outside(r)s of the USA and the international – framing "antifa" and "white supremacists" under the "domestic terrorist" label seem to have a direct relationship with the *foe*, with the *inimicus*. In this case, they would be the "domestic" version of the absolute enemy, and the

[256] "[…] its main purpose is to extend the availability of information on domestic terrorism. In particular, it vests the DHS, the DOJ and the FBI with very wide powers to monitor and investigate potential terrorist threats, including through surveillance over suspects. A public report of these activities must be issued by the involved departments and agencies every six months. In addition, the bill sets up an interagency task force mandated with combating white supremacism and neo-Nazism, perceived as the two major and most dangerous grounds for domestic terrorism." (Vedaschi and Graziani, 2023, p. 217).

[257] "[…] this bill is halfway between a Covid- 19-related act and a full-fledged counter-terrorism tool. It has a first part that is very similar to the draft Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act […] remarking the need for better information-sharing among agencies. Yet, it also has a second part dealing with some Covid-19-focused crimes. In particular, it frames "Covid-19 hate crimes" as offences characterized by two main co-existing features. First, they are motivated by the actual or perceived characteristic (e.g., race or ethnicity) of any person; and second, they are driven at the same time by the actual or perceived relationship between that specific characteristic and the spread of Covid-19. A possible example could be the targeting of some ethnic groups as Covid-19 spreaders, resulting in violent actions or narrative against them – something that happened in several contexts, including the United States, during the pandemic. The two limbs of this bill (i.e. domestic terrorism and Covid-19) are inextricably linked since, based on the draft text, Covid-19 hate crimes may amount to domestic terrorism crimes and thus be subjected to the same provisions, for example regarding the width of monitoring and surveillance powers by public authorities." (Vedaschi and Graziani, 2023, p. 218-219)

"domestic" version of the asymmetrical counterconcept (Schmitt, 2007, 2011; Walker, 2006a; Yamato, 2011, 2019, 2020; Koselleck, 2004; 2018).

It is important to highlight that, by now, it is clear that I am against racisms, LGBTQIA+phobia, persecution, and ethnically driven violence. And if the reader has a similar or equal position to mine, they might be wondering: "I understand the *concerns* surrounding the classification of 'antifa,' 'BLM,' and groups advocating for minority rights as 'terrorists.'" Additionally, the reader might have thought: "I also recognize why it is *problematic* to brand 'antifa,' 'BLM' and groups that act in defense of minorities as 'terrorists'. I understand why we can *condemn* President Trump's racist, xenophobic politics and policies. However, *why would there be an issue* with the Biden administration labeling violent 'white supremacist' groups that target others due to supposed 'differences' and 'inferiority' as 'terrorists'? Couldn't their actions be considered a form of 'terrorism?'"

If these questions have not crossed your mind (yet), they certainly have crossed mine. They have bothered me for long. Especially because I draw the line when it comes to "racism," "fascism," "supremacism" "LGBTQIA+phobia", "misogyny" and any kind of asymmetric discrimination.

Indeed, as Diala Shamas and Tarek Ismail (2020, n.p.) put it, "on the surface, it is tempting to seek to remedy that double standard by calling for forceful enforcement of criminal laws toward violence perpetrated by white supremacists." Also, regarding specifically the January 6, 2021 invasion of the Capitol, "the impulse makes sense. The insurrectionists killed a police officer, erected gallows, and carried the Confederate flag, a symbol of treason, through the hallowed halls of U.S. democracy" (Hager, 2021, n.p.).

However, I had a feeling it would still be problematic to resort to a label such as "terrorism". And I kept remembering that I said previously, in this dissertation, that deconstruction's effects are always salutary, as it insists that no assumption, claim or principle should be taken as given or unproblematic, *no matter how honorable it may look*. This way, no matter how honorable it sounds to label "racism" "fascism" and "supremacism" as "terrorism," with the help of "deconstruction," Shamas and Ismail (2020), Hager (2020) and Chang (2020), I came to two important understandings.

First, Hager (2021) and Shamas and Ismail (2020) assert that measures – EO, NSS, Acts, Laws – targeting "terrorism" often, and disproportionately, lead to over-

policing and affect minorities and social justice movements. They exemplify this scenario with some laws, such as *The Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act* (RICO, 1985)[258], which initially aimed at combating the Mafia and have ended up disproportionately[259] targeting racial minorities. Also, following the Oklahoma City bombing, in 1995, the *Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act* (AEDPA) of 1996, initially framed as a response to the Oklahoma City bombing, resulted in the restriction of appeal rights, primarily affecting Black defendants. Also, it imposed harsh deportation policies on "non-citizens," and led to laws that impacted Muslims. This way, the racial bias already present in the criminal justice system was exacerbated by the AEDPA. Also, following the Columbine shooting, in 1999, measures enacted ostensibly to address school shootings, predominantly affected urban, not suburban, schools, further criminalizing minority youth.

More shockingly, Hager (2021) posits, "hate crime" laws, which were supposed to facilitate the prosecution of offenses driven by "white supremacy" and any other manifestation of bigotry, inadvertently affect minorities. The author shows that in 2019, for example, despite constituting approximately 13 percent of the U.S. population, "Black" individuals were implicated in nearly 24 percent of hate crimes as reported by the Justice Department. Conversely, "White" people, accounting for 60 percent of the population, faced accusations in less than 53 percent of hate crime cases. This way, Shamas and Ismail (2020) remind us: "terrorism" is inherently a political name and, they add, "it" is often influenced by "racism" and "white supremacy." Consequently, the authors point that the treatment of "antifa" protesters and the predominantly "White mob" at the Capitol underscores disparities within the "domestic terrorism" discourse.

My second understanding was born from Jim Chang's (2021) intense provocations. Jim Chang (2021) essay *White Supremacists and the White Urge to call them Terrorists* underscores that even more concerning than paving the way for a racialized state of surveillance and punishment, choosing to label "white

[258] To read it, access: Cornell Law School. US Code, Title 18, Part I, Chapter 96 18 U.S. Code Chapter 96 - Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations, at: < https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/part-I/chapter-96>.

[259] In a 2012 study conducted by Jordan Blair Woods, a criminologist at the University of Arkansas School of Law, it was revealed that "racial minorities" were the focus of roughly 86 percent of federal criminal prosecutions using the RICO statute against gang-related cases (Hager, 2021).

supremacists" as "domestic terrorists" do not change the "white supremacist nature of America," a country founded on "genocide, racism and colonialism." (p. 75-76).

For Chang (2021) "white supremacy" is the bedrock of the USA (p. 76) and even President Joe Biden would be, in a way, a "white supremacist" – in sheep's clothing, however. More than that, and as Miller and Bhungalia (2022, p. 906) assert, on the one hand, the current U.S. drive to establish an apparatus for countering "domestic terrorism" pledges to be committed to reconciliation, unity and the safeguarding of "multiculturalism." On the other hand, however, it allows for the state's increasing and continuous use of force, which, in turn, innovates and renovates the "U.S. empire" both locally and globally.

Although I would not phrase this scenario exactly as Chang (2021) and Miller and Bhungalia (2022) did, I, too, recognize that "whiteness" and an "imperial" position has a significant place in the U.S. politics, in its "history," and in its "Wars on Terrors". This way, my second understanding focuses specifically on questioning the idea that "white supremacists" could be classified as "domestic terrorists" (FBI, 2022; The White House, 2021). This way, to question this choice of label, we should bear in mind that "terrorism" and "terrorists" are regarded as some-*thing* that does not belong to a "desirable, normal order." Rather, "they" are inadmissible, unwelcomed, unbecoming, and essentially asymmetric.

This way, "white supremacists" as "domestic terrorists" would not be part of "America," they would be "(un)American," they would be Schmitt's foe, called upon Koselleck's asymmetric, counterconceptual iterable relations. However, "white supremacists" as the Proud Boys, and the Boogaloos – to name only a few – are citizens of the USA. They are legal, documented citizens. They are not "outsiders;" rather, they operate from "within." They vote, they protest, they carry the country's flag. They were, for example, among the 61,9 million people who voted for President Trump in 2016, and the 74,2 million that voted for him in 2020 (Sullivan and Agiesta, 2020; Chang, 2021). How could then, "they" be "terrorists" if they are not *outsiders*?

Noteworthy, while some argue for equalized enforcement and for a specific labeling, that of "domestic terrorism," I understand that this approach fails to address the significance of discriminatory policies and discriminatory politics surrounding the choice of this name. Countering "terrorism" in this context, instead of addressing demands and discrimination, extend law enforcement powers of

surveillance, infiltration, detention and (mortal) use of force. This way, in invoking "terrorism" and pledging to wage "Wars on 'antifa' and 'white supremacist' Terrors" marginalized groups, rather than marginalization, become a primary target.

4.6
Re-opening re-marks: the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" as radical exclusions

This chapter tried to show that "war," whether resisted or not, is not an action of "living forces upon lifeless masses" (Clausewitz, 2007 [1832], p. 16) or upon monolithic entities – be "they" ethnicities, movements, religions or countries. Rather, "war" violates bodies, families, territories, infrastructures and supposedly "universal human rights." Following this assumption, this chapter's main concern did not lie in finding a final and clear-cut definition for the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" or in defining its "goals." Rather, it was interested in illustrating how the USA has been waging its "Wars on Terrors" – that is, how these "wars" has been affecting numerous "others" in the USA or elsewhere.

"This is not America!" (Public Papers, Book I, 2004, p. 768), "It has no place in America" (Trump 2017). These sentences – invoked in different moments by different authorities – conjured (both called and expelled) "terrorism" and relied on a basic division: what is "America-n" and what is "(un)America-n." In the same vein, U.S. *textiles* – Executive Orders, National Security Strategies, PATRIOT and FREEDOM acts, declarations – help/ed to reinforce this kind of division. For they not only claim to know, protect, and fight for the desirable "self," but also to know and not to be at ease with an outside an-*other* – which is considered a "threat" to "our identity" or "our nation" and, potentially, to "our very existence" –, an-*other* whose "Being" and "being" would belong to an asymmetric non-assimilable entity.

These *textiles* are not only "words" recorded on sheets of paper, on .pdf files, or in recorded – audible, visible and readable – proclamations and statements. Rather, they are "discursive-bombs," "discursive-military," "discursive-drones,"

"discursive-bans," "discursive-detentions," "discursive-tortures," "discursive-cages," "discursive-walls," "discursive-assassinations.[260]"

It is worth noting, this way, that what may resemble an overarching "grand narrative," with principles that *must* be upheld, is a center without a center, where asymmetric counterconceptual iterability, *différance*, supplementarity, deconstruction are already at work. For, as I proposed in this dissertation, if there is a "free, just, equal and democratic" world, there must be a "oppressed, unjust, unequal and autocratic" world; if there is a need for "conquer," there will be those who will be "conquered;" if there is a "just" cause, there is an "unjust cause;" if there is "triumph," there must be "defeat;" if there is a "land of the free and home of the brave," there is a "land of the oppressed and home of the coward;" if there is a "desirable inside," there is an "undesirable outside;" if there is a "desirable insider," "there is an "undesirable outsider;" and so on. This way, the second pairs are not only different from the first pairs; rather, they are inassimilable, unacceptable, asymmetrically inferior, something that would never be welcomed in the desired "order."

Even so, the examination of overarching "grand narratives" of the "land of the free, the home of the brave" request our attentive consideration. This way, since this chapter aimed at reflecting on how the USA has been "waging Wars on Terrors," boundary-producing-political-performances carried out by divisions among a "self" and an-"*other*," and an "inside" and an "outside" held an important place, especially because the U.S. *textiles* emphasize a supposed rigidity and immutability of particular re-presentations. Also, these *textiles* eagerly reiterate the supposed obviousness of the "Wars on Terrors."

Even though the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" do not rely on "natural" or "inevitable" divisions, these divisions continue to be widely propagated and acknowledged as legitimate methods for classifying places, peoples, and movements (Doty, 1996). These re-presentations' asymmetric iterable structures have different names, faces and locations over time. Paradoxically, however, some-

[260] I would like to thank Professor Alexandre Fernandes (Alexandre Osaniiyi) who kindly shared his extremely valuable insights on Jacques Derrida contributions by offering free online courses during pandemic times, and by sharing his publications with everyone. Because of his generosity and because of his publication "*Discursos político-religiosos como armas de guerra: heteroterrorismo em ação contra sexualidades dissidentes*" (2020), I could find a more direct way to express how "there is nothing outside of text," that is, how discourse and materiality overlap and are intimately entangled, for in his work he speaks of "discurso como bomba, exército, drone" (2020, p. 10).

thing remains: these re-presentations remain equated with disorder, degeneration and inadmissibility. Based on re-presentations – such as of "Muslims, Arabs and Middle-Easterners as essentially terrorists;" of "im/migrants and refugees as terrorists in the making;" and of both "antifa and white supremacists as domestic terrorists" – we can observe urgent, exceptional calls for the defense and surveillance, at any cost, of boundaries, borders and limits – those being not only geographical, but related the "identity/difference" divide. In this scenario, the "self" constantly becomes "we/us" – "we" either as in a small community, a state, or even the "West" – and it strives not to be "contaminated" by an-*other*. In this sense, in "waging Wars on Terrors" the U.S. *textiles* reinforce a supposed internal congruence to be maintained, and relentlessly (attempt to) banish any form of "difference" that defied/defies supposedly "universal" values.

Through ready-to-hand names, paradoxically, the "subject/object/abject" undergoes a distancing process of "othering" (Dillon, 1996). Some – "the foreign" and perhaps the "stranger" – are continuously forced to enter the boundaries of Western "self" knowledge and behavior. Others, such as "aliens" – "terrorists," "undocumented im/migrants," "violent extremists," etc. – are forced into the order of the abject – they do not matter, they are not matter, or, to express it more aptly, they are treated *as if* they were not so. They are treated as ethereal beings, devoid of substantial existence, and unable to meet the social criteria essential for even basic recognition (Butler and Spivak, 2007). This way, these spectral beings are therefore surveilled, persecuted, detained, tortured, banned, deported, returned, removed, or radically excluded.

Also paradoxically, the blurred "margin" and the "marginalized," the "disseminated," the "supplementary," the "abject terrorist" are more than just "external elements," they are the "interior of the interior" (Santiago, 1976). This way, parochial appeals not only appropriate the "other" and arbitrarily define (and distance) "it." More than that, they also depend on the existence of an-*other* to define the USA as a congruent, desirable and univocal "self" (Campbell, 1996). They belong to the realm of a *constitutive outside* being, therefore, *constitutive outsiders* (Walker, 2006, 2009; Yamato, 2019) that will *never* be welcomed but that will *forever* haunt a struggling "U.S. self."

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As a verb, "[to] wage" means "to begin and continue a war, a battle" (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 2023, n.p.). However, as a noun, "wage" denotes rewards, primarily financial, someone receives for doing their job. The USA has long been engaging in "Wars on Terrors" not only in the name of its population, but in the name of a broader "western civilization" – regardless of who "they" are.

Nevertheless, we might ponder "who is profiting (earning a wage) from it?" Certainly not those upon whom labels of "terrorism" fall, for a supposed ideal of "unity in diversity" imposes its will upon the "enemy," the "alien," the "extremist" and, at the same time, instead of focusing on processes of marginalization, focuses on asymmetrically marginalizing an-*other*.

5
Eluding Security

5.1
Introduction

Some may argue that David Rapoport (2013) was right: that "religious terrorism" came to an end. As briefly demonstrated in chapter 2, this author asserted "religious terrorism" started in 1979 and predicted "it" would be replaced by some other new *wave* of "terrorism" 40 years later. More recently, Rapoport (2022) updated his prediction, asserting that "if it follows the pattern of its predecessors, it ["religious terrorism"] should last a generation and end sometime in the late 2020s" (p. 260).

This perspective anticipated a successive pattern, where a novel form of "terrorism" would emerge, capturing attention and instilling fear, reminiscent of the way "religious terrorism" supposedly succeeded the "new left wave," which succeeded the "anti-colonial wave," which, in turn, succeeded the "anarchist wave." Nevertheless, embracing this perspective requires accepting the assumption that each "new wave of terrorism" wholly supersedes its predecessor. It also requires one to assume that Rapoport's hypothesis universally encapsulates the entirety of violent manifestations throughout the world and, more precisely, that "terrorism" conforms to a clearly delineated definition, akin to being encapsulated in a high-definition picture. This way, those who consider Rapoport (2013) was right, entertain the idea that "terrorism" is, after all, not elusive.

While I am indebted to and acknowledge the intellectual influence of Rapoport's work, I found myself traversing a different path. I think of elusiveness where some may see concreteness; I see traces where some may see identities, points and lines; I see an endless chain of remittances where some may see foundations. Consequently, I am skeptical about structuring "terrorism" as something that happens in "waves," as well as of his prediction of "religious terrorism" coming to an end soon. Even so, I am still interested in thinking about it – not because I adopt this framing of "religious terrorism," or any other, but because

experts, policymakers, the media, and many interested in discussing "terrorism" invoke the keyword "terrorism" together with other descriptive names – religious, left-wing, right wing, domestic, international, transnational, insecurity, danger, threat, etc. – constantly.

Throughout the development of this dissertation – which is focused on the USA – I have noted persistent endeavors to characterize and/or scrutinize "the new face of terrorism" (Laqueur, 1998); inquiries into "what's new about new terrorism?" (Tucker, 2001); examinations of the concept of "new terrorism" (Kometer, 2004); and discussions on "old *vs.* new terrorism" (Gofas, 2012). In the same vein, in recent years, particularly since 2020, I have observed there has been a prevalent notion suggesting that "we once fought jihadists, now we battle white supremacists" (Rose and Soufan, 2020, n.p.); that the primary "terrorist threat" in the United States today arises from a diverse range of sources across the political spectrum, fueled by widespread access to firearms, political polarization, and online communication, creating a complex and varied "threat" that transcends traditional notions of "terrorist organizations" (Bergen and Sterman, 2023)[261]; that "*domestic* terrorism is on the rise" (USA GAO, 2023, n.p.); and that, given this significant increase, there is a "urgent" call for coordinated collaboration among local, state, and federal agencies to address the "escalating threat" effectively (USA GAO, 2023)[262].

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[261] Bergen and Sterman's (2023) report "*Terrorism in America after 9/11*" emphasizes that "far from being foreign infiltrators, the large majority of people accused of jihadist terrorism-related crimes in the United States have been American citizens or legal residents." The report also understands that "since 9/11, jihadists have killed 107 people inside the United States. This death toll is similar to that from far-right terrorism (consisting of anti-government, militia, white supremacist, and anti-abortion violence), which has killed 134 people. The United States has also seen attacks in recent years inspired by black separatist/nationalist ideology and ideological misogyny. Individuals motivated by these ideologies have killed 13 and 17 people respectively and those with Far-Left views have killed one person. America's terrorism problem today is homegrown and is not the province of any one group or ideological perspective." To see data provided by the report, visit: <https://www.newamerica.org/future-security/reports/terrorism-in-america/what-is-the-threat-to-the-united-states-today/>.

[262] According to the USA Government Accountability Office (USA GAO) report "*The Rising Threat of Domestic Terrorism in the U.S. and Federal Efforts to Combat It*", last updated in 2023, in recent years, numerous, widely public attacks have underscored the seriousness of "domestic terrorism." Notably, in May 2022, in Buffalo, New York, a "racially motivated" person took the lives of 10 people. Another poignant example highlighted by the report is the 2018 attack on a Pittsburgh synagogue that resulted in the loss of 11 lives. Following these and many other examples, the USA GAO understands that an alarming trend is revealed by data indicating that almost all states in the U.S. have experienced at least one incident of "domestic terrorism" between 2010 and 2021. Moreover, over the past decade, the report indicates there has been a staggering 357% increase in "domestic terrorism-related" investigations. According to the Department of Homeland Security

Interestingly, however, I have *also* come across numerous alerts from entities such as the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, the Department of State, and the Federal Bureau of Intelligence (Herridge, 2023; Lucas, 2023; Miller, 2023; Miller and Campbell, 2023; Wray, 2023 – among others), cautioning about a "steady drumbeat of calls for attacks by *foreign* terrorist organizations" (Wray, 2023, n.p.). This heightened focus on potential "foreign terror threats" has been particularly noteworthy since October 2023, largely due to the more recent manifestations of the Palestinian-Israeli ongoing conflict.

In his *Statement to the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs on October 31, 2023* and his *Statement to the Senate Judiciary Committee on December 5, 2023*, FBI Director Christopher Wray asserted that the USA is currently facing a "dangerous period" due to the ongoing conflict in the "Middle East," which he believes could prompt dormant "terrorists" to act, thereby escalating the "threat" of attacks against U.S. nationals – both at home and elsewhere[263]. Wray's statements underscored the need for concern not only regarding "violent extremists" or "lone offenders" but also towards "foreign terrorist organizations" like *al-Qaeda*, ISIS, or Hezbollah.

Additionally, Wray warned that "the threats from foreign adversaries to our homeland continue to evolve," (2023b, n.p.) expressing an apparent unique level of concern by stating he has "*never seen a time* where all the threats, or so many of the threats, are all elevated all at exactly the same time." However, he also says that "we haven't seen evidence that it's actually happening yet, but what we have seen is, and I listed them off in my opening remarks, one terrorist organization after another calling for attacks."

(DHS), there were 231 incidents, encompassing both attacks and plots, meeting their definition of "domestic terrorism" between the years of 2010 and 2021, with a notable concentration in states hosting major metropolitan areas, including California, New York, and Washington, D.C. The report further highlights that the second-largest category of "domestic terrorist attacks" was driven by "anti-government or anti-authority motivated violent extremism," resulting in 15 deaths also between 2010 and 2021. Additionally, it understands that there were incidents related to "animal rights extremists" and "abortion-related violent extremists," among others. To see the graphics provided by the USA GAO (2023), visit: <https://www.gao.gov/blog/rising-threat-domestic-terrorism-u.s.-and-federal-efforts-combat-it>.

[263] As Miller and Campbell (2023, n.p.) highlight, the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI and the National Counterterrorism Center issued a "*Joint Intelligence Bulletin*" on December 2023 – which is not available to the public yet but has been obtained by CNN. This bulletin advises U.S. citizens and diplomats residing abroad to exercise caution due to the possibility of "terrorist attacks, (and) demonstrations or violent actions" targeting them and/or their interests.

Also, as previously stated *ante* in Chapter 2, the *Declaration of National Emergency by Reason of Certain Terrorist Attacks* – signed uninterruptedly, and yearly, since 2001 – states that a "national emergency" exists due to the September 11, 2001 attacks as well as due to "continuing and immediate threats" (Federal Register, 2001), "ongoing threats" (The White House, 2016) "a threat that continues" (The White House, 2019), and a "terrorist threat that persists […] beyond 2023" (The White House, 2023). Complementing this perspective, the U.S. Department of State (2023), through its *Bureau of Terrorism*, still identifies and designates "State Sponsors of Terrorism." The current list identifies Cuba (as of 2021), the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (as of 2017), Iran (as of 1984), and Syria (as of 1979)[264].

New terrorism, imminent threat, persistent threat, "steady drumbeat of calls for attacks" oddly *never seen before* but also considered an *ongoing danger* (Wray, 2023, n.p.). Among these *new* but also *continuing, ongoing, persistent immediate threats*, there seems to lie, altogether, the manifestations – or, in Rappoport's terms (2013), the successors of – "religious terrorism," "violent extremism," "lone offenders," "jihadists," "state sponsors of terrorism," "domestic terrorists," "international terrorists," and "transnational terrorists."

Uneasiness in identifying, naming, combatting – grasping – not only "terrorism" but "new kinds of terrorism" – has continuously been there. They are not a novelty. They are not an exclusive concern/prediction of Rapoport (2013). Interestingly, however, these unease attempts have been conjuring – both calling and expelling – different "terrorisms."

All this feels unprecedented but oddly familiar, I would say. Perhaps because the conjuration of "terrorism" relies upon the domestic/international, inside/outside, identity/difference divides, upon the spatialization/temporalization strategies, upon constitutive outsides and constitutive outsiders, upon *différance*, structural iterability, hauntology and the endless play of the supplement. Perhaps because

[264] According to this list, "Countries determined by the Secretary of State to have repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism are designated pursuant to three laws: section 1754(c) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, section 40 of the Arms Export Control Act, and section 620A of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. Taken together, the four main categories of sanctions resulting from designation under these authorities include restrictions on U.S. foreign assistance; a ban on defense exports and sales; certain controls over exports of dual use items; and miscellaneous financial and other restrictions." (USA Department of State, 2023, n.p.).

"terrorism" has been "eluding security." Perhaps because "security" is elusive (in) itself. Perhaps because deconstruction has always already been happening.

Commencing with its title, this dissertation entertains the idea that "terrorism" is "eluding security" and given this, that the U.S. foreign policy persistently wages "Wars on Terrors." And, as the reader might have already noticed, to explore this suggestion I previously unraveled some keywords invoked in this title, those being: "terrorism," "foreign policy," "persistence" –iterability/structural iterability, différance, supplementarity, hauntology –, and "war." So, now the time has come to think about what is firstly suggested to the reader, that is, to delve into the idea of "eluding security." To do so, I re-invoke *textiles* already unraveled in order to provisionally – as they are constantly on the move – weave them together.

This way, this chapter is structured as follows. After this introduction – section 5.1 – I briefly explore, in section 5.2, the idea of "security" and how it is constantly invoked in the U.S. textiles as a mantra, a no-brainer, a ready-to hand watchword that attempts to justify any measures to combat or avoid "terrorism." Then, in section 5.3, I suggest that multiple "constitutive outsides" (Walker, 2006) and "constitutive outsiders" (Yamato, 2019), as being an integral part of the modern international, are also meaningful to justify "security concerns" and, of course, the existence of "Wars on Terrors" in the USA. Finally, in section 5.4, I briefly revisit, and provisionally conclude, how (structural) iterability, asymmetrical counterconcepts, *différance* and hauntology walk hand in hand with the elusiveness of "security" and, therefore, the elusiveness of "terrorism". This way, in this chapter I work like Bilbo Baggins[265], the hobbit, who goes *there, and back again*[266]. And, in so doing, I, once again, revisit my suggestion of *persistent, haunting, elusive* "Wars on Terrors."

5.2
In the name of (whose) security?

> […] strategic violence is less a function of the state than an instance of its own assertion. And instead of regulating the territorial and ethnonational boundaries of modern state identity,

[265] Bilbo Baggins is a character created by J. R. R. Tolkien. He is the protagonist – and, somehow, the writer – of *The Hobbit – there and back again* (1937). He is also a secondary character of Tolkien's trilogy *Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955).

[266] When I say that in this chapter I work like Bilbo Baggins, I reinforce the idea presented at the end of Chapter 1, where I posit that this dissertation does not hold a linear, progressive presentation.

> strategic violence is an ongoing process of defining state boundaries, excluding that which differs from its domain, and punishing those who would challenge it.
>
> Bradley Klein (1994, p. 7).

> It would, therefore, be an easy task to establish that security is the first and foundational requirement of the State, of modern understandings of politics, and of International Relations, not only by reference to specific political theorists but also by reference to the discourses of States.
>
> Michael Dillon (1996, p. 12).

Despite the acknowledged difficulty, if not outright impossibility, of flawlessly navigating discourses pertaining to the U.S. foreign policy and the persistence of "Wars on Terrors" – as, at this point, it is evident that I recognize the susceptibility of any political lexicon to scrutiny – I chose to rigorously pay attention to significant *names* invoked in this dissertation until its very end.

This holds true for "security." Nevertheless, I should start this section with a warning already made in previous chapters: a conclusive, unambiguous explanation is deliberately withheld from the reader. Doing otherwise would implicate in the logocentric, teleological search of solid foundations – with precise beginnings, middles, and ends.

"Security! What do you mean?" (Huysmans, 1998). Perhaps many of us, as inter/national relations analysts, have heard this question. Or maybe we have asked ourselves this very same thing. Or maybe the reader even thought about asking me this exact question upon encountering this dissertation's title. The names "security," "domestic security," or "international security" are constantly summoned and propagated through different means: the media, everyday conversations, public speeches, academic debates and, of course, U.S. textiles. And, although there is not a concrete shared sense on what these terms mean, they roll "so easily off the tongue to circulate among the practices of modern violence" (Walker, 1997, p. 61).

Be that as it may, when invoked, the *name* "security" also[267] carries an air of assumed clarity, as if the term necessitates no profound scrutiny. As Michael Dillon (1996, p. 12) provokingly reminds us, "security, of course, saturates the language of modern politics. Our political vocabularies reek of it and our political imagination is confined by it." Nevertheless, simply invoking Jef Huysmans' question prompts a sobering realization – that elucidating the meaning of "security"

[267] Like "terrorism," "terrorist," "foreign policy," "democracy," "danger," "state," "anarchy," "identity," "international," "domestic," "peace," "war," and so forth.

proves to be a challenging, elusive endeavor. Even so, it is important to revisit the way this name has been invoked.

"Security," as defined by the Oxford Learner's Dictionary (2023, n.p.), encompasses a broad spectrum of "activities involved in protecting a country, building or person *against* attack, danger, etc." Notably, the dictionary elucidates the role of "national security" or "homeland security" apparatuses in defending a country. Objects, such as "bars," would also contribute to "security" by acting as deterrents against break-ins. The concept further extends to procedural measures, exemplified by "security checks at the airport" and the implementation of passwords to *secure* various accounts, including email, banking, and social media. Additionally, "security," as delineated by this dictionary, would also not be limited to physical structures but extend to the presence of forces and services, exemplified by law enforcement agencies like the police and the military.

Moreover, the Oxford Learner's Dictionary (2023) acknowledges the gradation of "security levels," such as in a "high/maximum security prison." The justification for "surveillance" is presented as well, emphasizing, for example, a "security video" role in the apprehension of criminals. The term could also refer to the protection of "national borders," or, even, be embodied in the roles of professionals, such as "security advisers" or "security experts." Additionally, it could serve as an indicator of potential occurrences, as seen in "security alerts," "security concerns," or "security threats."

In a similar vein, another term frequently employed in analogous contexts to "security" is "safety." According to the same dictionary consulted, "safety" is defined as "the state of being safe and protected from danger or harm" (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 2023, n.p.). This definition underscores the notion of *someone* being safe from *something,* or of *someone* being secured – from various "threats," whether from criminal activities, conflicts, attacks, or other potential "dangers."

Additionally, Lamb and Robertson-Snape's *Historical Dictionary of International Relations* (2017) understands that "security" might indicate a state of "being free from a threat to cherished values" such as "survival" (p. 311). The authors also pay attention to the idea that "almost any possible threat to human well-being can be considered a security threat" (p. 313). In so defining "security," they

contest traditional views – further explored – that exclusively link it to the idea of "securing" the state from either coercion or invasion (p. 313).

Regardless of the differences present in these definitions, it is important to note that authorities – like those invoked here, i.e., Bush, Obama, Trump, Biden, and countless others – consistently call upon "security" and "safety" to justify interventions, persecutions, surveillance measures, wartime actions, bans, and similar initiatives. This way, as observed by Dillon (1996), the pervasive use of these two terms – and, I would add, their *supplements*, such as "danger," "threat," "risk," "imminence," "enemy," "criminal," "foe," "hostility," etc. – saturates modern politics and imposes limitations on our imaginative capacities.

Having this in mind, and since these two terms seem to intertwine in political *textiles*, this section pays attention to the first *name*, i.e., "security" – having in mind, of course, that the idea of "being secured from something," and many other supplements encompass its meanings, such as "insecurity." This way, even though I recognize that "security" is an essentially contested concept (Gallie, 1956; Lamb and Robertson-Snape, 2017; Smith, 2005; Baylis, 2008) – and that an aporia between "security" and "insecurity" is always already at work (Burke, 2002; Shepherd and Weldes, 2008), that of (in)security – I acknowledge "it" has been constantly invoked in international relations *textiles*, including those of the USA. That being the case, its persistence in our political vocabularies demands careful examination.

Given the prevailing and traditional association of "security" with the state-centric realm of the military (Walt, 1991; Smith, 2005; Shepherd and Weldes, 2008), perhaps this *name* initially evokes, to some of us, the image of a "military domain" centered on the constant possibility of a "*Clausewitzean* war"[268]. That is, the traditional view of "security" is mainly provided by those called "rationalists" (Shepherd and Weldes, 2008) or "realists" (Smith, 2005) – may they be structural, offensive, defensive, neoclassical realists and its variations (see Feng and Ruizhuang 2006; Rose, 1998; Schweller 1994; Walt 1991; Waltz 1979, 2001; Wohlforth 2009; Zakaria 1992, to name a few).

Having in mind, by all means, nuanced divergences evident among proponents of this "traditional view of security," I still observe that a notable

[268] See chapter 4, section 4.2.

consensus emerges on a pivotal factor: "security" alludes to "the military dimension of a state" (Smith, 2005, p. 27) within an "anarchical system" through a logics of survival, power and self-help (Nogueira and Messari, 2005).

This traditional view of "security"[269] understands that some actors (such as the state, institutions and individuals) are rational, self-interested and prioritize value-maximizing relations (Shepherd and Weldes, 2008). Some of its authors also assume that "state policy" relies on *systemic factors* (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimmer, 1990; Baylis, 2008) – where "the biggest threat to security is considered to be […] anarchy" (Lamb and Robertson-Snape, 2017, p. 312) – and/or is directly affected by *key actors* – such as heads of state and powerful pressure groups, like civil society (Wohlforth, 2009).

This way, adepts of this view of "security" presuppose that "the nature of states [as well of the 'international system'] is given and fixed, at least for all practical purposes, and security requires securing states against *objective* and *external* threats" (Shepherd and Weldes, 2008). This perspective considers the existence of an "international system" characterized as a "brutal arena in which states would seek to achieve their own security at the expense of their neighbors" (Baylis, 2008, p. 496).

It is important to note, however, that within this framing of "security," efforts toward cooperation by certain actors are acknowledged, yet they encounter constraints imposed by relentless processes of competition. Consequently, according to this perspective, states are only left with the option of striving to maintain a *balance of power* among each other, preventing any single entity from attaining widespread hegemony (Baylis, 2008, p. 496).

Put simply, according to the traditional view of "security," "*because the world has been largely violent in the past this is how it is likely to continue*" (p. 496). This way, for traditional thinkers, "security" is conceived as a condition marked by the absence of "insecurity" – where "security" holds positive attributes

[269] Stephen Walt (1991), for example, famously argued against any kind of broadening definitions of "security." The author, although recognizing that "the boundaries of intellectual disciplines are permeable" and that "as a result, any effort to delineate the precise scope of security studies is somewhat arbitrary" (p. 212), declares categorically that "the main focus of security studies is easy to identify, however: it is the phenomenon of war" (p. 212) and that "security studies may be defined as the study of the threat, use, and control of military force" (p. 212).

while "insecurity" is its opposite, inferior and negative pair (Shepherd and Weldes, 2008).

Nevertheless, the idea of "security" has been broadened and questioned in international relations (see Buzan 1983; Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, 1998; Wæver, 1995; Hansen, 2000; Adler and Barnett, 1998; Katzenstein, 1996; Krause and Williams, 1997; Bilgin, Booth and Jones, 1998; Enloe, 2014; Sylvester, 2007; Sjoberg, 2009; Alison, 2016; Tickner, 1997; Peterson, 1992; 2013 – among others). These, and countless other authors[270], called and still call our attention to the idea that "security" is not a neutral name and that "it" does not exclusively refer to the *affairs of the state*. This way, through different approaches – the *Copenhagen School*, *Constructivisms*, *Critical Security Studies*, *Feminism*, *Gender Studies* etc. – these authors – who consider "security" a derivative name (Smith, 2005), for it presupposes something to "be secured" – have enriched understandings by approaching the subject from diverse, contesting, and occasionally divergent perspectives.

The *Copenhagen School*[271] broadens the perspective on "security" and examines "it" not only through the traditional lens focused on the "military sphere." In so doing, these authors intricately analyze the interplay of "security" with other sectors, encompassing the political, economic, ecological, and societal realms (Buzan 1983; Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998). The Copenhagen School approach

[270] As an undergraduate, a master's student and a Ph.D. student in International Relations, I had the opportunity to attend classes exclusively dedicated to critically thinking about "International Security." And in each one of these classes – taught by professors Renatho Costa, Marcelo Valença, Mônica Herz, Pinar Bilgin, Paula Sandrin, and Paula Drummond – we explored diverse themes. These included discussions on the methods and (possibility of a) discipline of "Security Studies;" various schools like the Aberystwyth School, the Copenhagen School, and the Paris School; approaches such as "Securitization," "Ontological Security," "Fantasy," "Affect," "Emotions," "Emancipation," "Insecurity," "Cosmopolitanism," "Biopolitics," "Public Security," "Aesthetic," "Resilience," "Cybernetics," "Security and Popular Culture"; and the undeniable contribution of "Critical Security Studies" to broadening, enriching and challenging a supposed well-bound field of study. Furthermore, I had the privilege of teaching classes on "War and Peace" under the guidance of Professor Marcelo Valença, and "Contemporary International Conflicts" under the guidance of Professor Kai Kenkel. These experiences provided an opportunity to contemplate diverse perspectives on the modern international and the persistent violences it encompasses. Key ideas explored included "Cultural Wars," "Peace Studies," "Deterrence," "Ethnic Conflicts" "Terrorism," "Resource Wars," the "Security-Development nexus," "State and colonialism," "Gender and War," and "Collective Security." Due to these opportunities and the diverse perspectives on "security" they provided me, I want to emphasize that this section only scratches the surface of much more extensive discussions.

[271] This approach provides a vast literature to the IR Security Studies and its most famous works are represented by the contributions of Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, Jaap de Wilde, and Lene Hansen

also extends beyond "national security" to encompass "individual security" as an important feature (Buzan 1983). In this perspective, individuals would seek "security" not only against "external threats" but also from potential "threats" originating from the "state itself" (Lamb and Robertson-Snape 2017, p. 212)[272].

Constructivists[273] share some premises, such as the idea that structure and agents are co-constituted and that, despite difficulties involved, changes in the international environment are possible. Put simply, constructivists characterize "individual and state security as social constructs susceptible to limitless reformulation over time by willing and willful actors rather than as a static concept fixed to definable and unchanging conditions [...]" (Kolodziej, 2005, p. 260)[274]. Alluding to Alexander Wendt's seminal work, "Anarchy is what states make of it" (1992), constructivist security studies highlight that "security is what states make of it."

Feminist and *Gender Studies*[275], in turn, pay attention to "women's insecurity," "to queer insecurity," to "gender relations" in times of "war," to women as *subjects*, but also as agents of *violence*; and ask simple, but very important questions regarding "international security": "Where are the women?" (Enloe, 2014) and "Where are the queer?" (Leigh, 2017)[276]. Put simply, beyond an "anarchical international system," they perceive an international shaped and (re)produced through gender hierarchies – they examine the *micro* and challenge the *macro* – "the personal is international, and the international is personal" (Enloe,

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[272] These authors also delve into the concept of "securitization," "macrosecuritization" and "desecuritization" which, put simply, involve (un)framing something as an immediate, significant, and justified "security matter" through discursive acts, particularly speech acts and particular loci of enunciation (Wæver, 1995; 2009; 2012). Additionally, the work of Hansen (2000) explores, among other things, the need for incorporation of gender aspects into the realm of "securitization studies."

[273] This perspective is most notably elucidated in the seminal contributions of Nicholas Onuf (1989), Friedrich Kratochwil (1989), and Alexander Wendt (1992; 1999).

[274] Emannuel Adler, Michael Barnett and Peter Katzenstein, for example, pay attention to social processes, more specifically to the social construction of "security communities," (Adler and Barnett, 1998), as well as to norms, identities and culture roles in "security matters" (Katzenstein, 1996).

[275] We can illustrate the vast contribution of Feminist and Gender Studies through the works of Ann Tickner (1997), Christine Sylvester (2007), Cynthia Enloe (2014), Cynthia Weber (2014), Laura Sjöberg (2009), Miranda Alison (2016), Spike Peterson (1992; 2013), Marysia Zalewski, Paula Drumond *et al*. (2018), etc.

[276] These authors challenge traditional "security thinking" (and "security doing") to (re)consider how our understandings of global politics can be enhanced by paying attention to human experiences through gender lenses. They also remind us that *Gender Studies* persist and challenge conventional approaches, exposing depoliticization in both the social and academic realms, shedding light on silences and contradictions (Sylvester, 2007).

1990). In so doing, they question how the lives of marginalized individuals – LGBTQIA+, cis women, cis men – impact and are impacted by global politics.

On the other hand, *Critical Security Studies*[277] question directly "traditional security studies" and "problem-solving theories" (Krause and Williams, 1997, p. xi). Additionally, they pay special attention to the possibility of "human emancipation" (Jones, Bilgin, Booth, 1998). By undertaking this task, they aim to critically analyze, deconstruct and reconstruct (Bilgin, 2008) existing and prevailing assertions regarding "security."[278] According to them, moving away from "objectivist rational-actor theories" and redirecting attention towards "historically and reflexively constituted practices" offers a more profound approach to comprehending the diverse manifestations of conflict and "security" in the present-day world (Krause and Williams, 1997, p. 52).

Certainly, this concise overview of various assessments of "inter/national security" does not adequately do justice to the depth of each author's or approach's contributions. Each of them deserves a more extensive discussion, but such detailed exploration is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

What matters here is, on the one hand, to acknowledge that there are authors who concentrate on state-centered, systemic and military aspects, such as Walt (1991) – who disapproves of including "issues such as pollution, disease, child abuse, or economic recessions [...] as threats to 'security'" (p. 213) in the name of a supposed coherence[279]. Put simply, according to the traditional view of "security," "citizens were assumed to be secure when their state was secure from invasion or coercion" (Lamb and Robertson-Snape, p. 312).

Or As Walker (1997, p. 63) puts it, the traditional approaches on security find shelter in a "powerful consensus that the state does indeed provide a satisfactory

[277] This approach also provides a rich and vast literature to the IR Security Studies. Its most notable authors are Keith Krause, Michael C. Williams, Pinar Bilgin, Ken Booth and Richard Wynn Jones.
[278] In the preface of "*Critical Security Studies*" Krause and Williams (1997) state that "security studies" have been amidst the last orthodox bastions in international relations to allow critical claims into its problematic. In this sense, the origins of critical security studies, as a field, date back to the early 1990s, and are characterized as the "next stage" for security studies (Bilgin; Booth; Wyn Jones, 1998). However, the ideas that nourished it precede that decade and involve multiple actors – activists, intellectuals such as those from the Frankfurt School, and social movements that have long been engaged in thinking beyond Cold War traditional frameworks on how to "do security" (Bilgin, 2008).
[279] As for him, "defining the field in this way would destroy its intellectual coherence and make it more difficult to devise solutions to these important problems" (p. 213).

[…] answer to the most fundamental questions about the character and location of political life." More importantly, we must also acknowledge that some of these "traditional/conventional authors" inform political strategies and media discussions – i.e., not only do they teach academic classes and publish widely read books, but they are also "security advisers" and "security experts."[280]

However, on the other hand, we must also not forget that there is a myriad of authors directs their attention to the processes involved in constructing what is termed "security." This way, not only do they scrutinize what is being perceived as a "threat to security" but they also draw attention to those the role of the state and how it affects human well-being, gender relations, and the possibilities for change and even emancipation.

Consequently, *non-traditional* approaches, despite presenting diverse views in their contributions, strive to offer critical assessments of "security," and, in so doing, to re-think "security doing." This way, certainly, "security" implies diverse, fluid and competing interpretations. It is a trace -i.e. a "signifier" between quotation marks. In other words, its assessments result from continuous "cross-fertilizations" (C.A.S.E. COLLECTIVE, 2006).

The problem with *a part of* the non-traditional assessments of "inter/national security" I mentioned before lies in the persistent conceptualization of "society," "identity," "gender," the "state," and the dichotomy between the "domestic" and the "international" as naturally given, static entities with a purely present and predetermined "ontico-ontological" status. Furthermore, the state is consistently upheld as an uncontested actor in most analyses, and the explanation of "inter/national security" often relies heavily on the paradigm of "military security" (Smith, 2005).

Even so, while I acknowledge the significant roles that the state and the military play in the modern international – as I invoke both these names constantly

[280] For example: Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Joseph Nye and Fareed Zakaria were *must-read* authors during my years as an undergraduate and master's student in International Relations. Kissinger held positions like "Secretary of State" and "National Security Advisor" during Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford's administrations; Brzezinski was a "National Security Advisor" during Jimmy Carter's administration; Joseph Nye worked as "Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs" from 1994 to 1995; and Fareed Zakaria publishes for "The Washington Post" and to "Newsweek," and is also a tv host at CNN. This way, not only did (and do) these authors inform academics of "International Relations" or "Political Science;" rather, they advise(d) governments on how to deal with what they considered "dangers" and "opportunities" through "rational, self-interested and value-maximizing relations."

in this dissertation – I reject the notion that they possess an unquestionable essence. Because of this, I consider this dissertation a "critical" assessment of "security." Also because the perspectives reunited so far in previous chapters establish a dialogue with what came to be called "non-traditional security thinking" and, especially, with those labeled *Critical Security Studies*.

However, as I show in the next pages, even if, like many of the aforementioned authors, I do agree with questioning prevailing assertions of "security" – such as its supposed givenness, fixity and value-maximizing "nature" – and even though I pay attention the *margins,* I still see groundlessness where some identify foundations, and pay special attention to the roles of "identity," "difference," "inside," "outside" and "discourse" (Shepherd and Weldes, 2008). That is why, since the beginning I positioned this work as "poststructuralist."

This way, as Michael Dillon reminds us,

> We could not then escape noticing the way security impresses itself upon us as a kind of floating and radically inter-textual signifier which, by constant reference to all other signs of the times, transgresses disciplinary, political, corporeal and geographical boundaries as it courses throughout the defining technologically inspired discourses of Modernity: state security; national security; political security; global security; regional security; territorial security; economic security; financial security; individual security; collective security; personal security; physical security; psychological security; sexual security; social security; environmental security; food security […] (1996, p. 16)

It is possible to observe, then, that invoking "security" entails resorting to innumerable other [quasi-] concepts – such as sovereignty, anarchy, state, domestic, international, inside, outside, before, now, after, identity, difference, us, and them. It entails resorting processes of repetition, ritualization, institutionalization, affirmation and negation, inclusion and exclusion (Walker, 2019, p. 62). In other words, it entails resorting to boundaries, borders and limits (Ashley, 1987; Vaughan-Williams, 2009; Walker, 2009; Lindahl, 2013).

More than that, we may acknowledge that academic and policy-making attempts to "write security" and to "do security" are permeated by many uncertainties and (sometimes anxious) desires. On the one hand, they systematically attempt map what has been produced regarding "international security." On the other hand, to alert to the dangers of essentialization and the creation of unproductive boundaries (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams, 2010; Wæver, 2012;

Shepherd and Weldes, 2008). However, due to this anxious dynamic, inclusions can simultaneously result in exclusions (Sylvester, 2012). That is, including certain subjects/elements as "subjects of security" can concurrently lead to the exclusion of others – either as "objects of security," or as "abjects of security."

This way, by wondering "how would it make sense to think and write about 'security' in this dissertation?", I took into consideration the contributions of authors explored in previous chapters (Ashley, 1987, 1988, 1989; Auchter, 2014; Bialasiewicz et al. 2007; Derrida, 1966, 1968, 1978, 1988, 2006, 2008; Campbell, 1998; Koselleck, 2004, 2018, Walker, 2010, etc.) and incorporated the contributions made by Jef Huysmans (1998), Laura Shepherd and Jutta Weldes (2008), and Michael Dillon (1996).

Huysmans (1998) presents us the idea of thinking about "security" through a "post-structurally thick signifier approach" (p. 248). Through this angle, it is possible to unravel, or at least understand, security's embeddedness into sets of rules that claim to delineate its "unique" characteristics, and to elucidate how "it" structures "relations to nature, to other human beings and to the self." (1998, p. 248).

It also help us understand that specific meanings of security walk hand in hand in defining security agendas themselves, i.e., "an interpretation of security policy is an interpretation of what the play of the signifier 'security' does." (Huysmans, 1998, p. 248). This way, rather than seeking shelter in "technical logics of necessity" (p. 249) – where we *must* discern "threats," their origins, and devise the most optimal countermeasures for maximum effectiveness and efficiency – it would be best to wonder "what happens when we do this?" for, this question constantly "slips out of […] interpretation." (Huysmans, 1998, p. 249).

Laura Shepherd and Jutta Weldes (2008), in turn, challenge the notion that ideas of "security" and "insecurity" are grounded in objective realities rather than being products of discursive constructions (p. 532)[281]. This way, they advocate for the "security as discourse" approach, emphasizing that identities are constantly re-crafted through representation, specifically through "discursive practices." This approach allows us to understand that "discursive practices" seek to establish a

[281] The title of their contribution "Security: the state (of) being free from danger?" problematizes conventional perspectives that associate "security" with either the " safety of a sovereign state in an anarchical system" or with "an individual" being free from "danger."

"common sense" and, simultaneously, attempt to discourage questioning while imposing closure. Conversely, the "security as discourse" approach strives to defamiliarize common sense understandings "so to make their constructedness apparent" (p. 533).

Building upon the "security as discourse" approach, a "poststructuralist" contemplation of "security" delves into the intricate power dynamics within institutions that prioritize specific representations over others (Shepherd and Weldes, 2008, p. 534; Martin, 2005; Williams, 2005). This perspective unveils the construction of certain "subjects" and the portrayal of an assumed "social order" and "static entities," recognizing they are "ever in a process of becoming" (Edkins, 2002, p. 71). This way, a "poststructuralist analysis of in/security in fact problematizes the ways in which 'the real world' comes to be recognized as such" (Shepherd and Weldes, 2008, p. 535) and pays attention to how "discursive practices" play a crucial role in allowing individuals to "make sense of their social locations and identities" (p. 535).

In other words, as per Shepherd and Weldes (2008, p. 534), a "poststructural" perspective elucidates that the notions of "in/security" and the corresponding answers to "it" are closely tied to the performative re-crafting of "political identity." Or, as Campbell puts it, "security […] is first and foremost a *performative* discourse constitutive of political order: […] securing something requires its *differentiation, classification and definition*. It has, in short, to be identified" (1998, p. 199).

Michael Dillon (1996), in turn, reminds us of that "security," commonly conceptualized as an "instinctive impulse" (e.g., survival instinct) or an "axiomatic principle" (e.g., the right to life or self-defense), became a value deeply embedded in modern political understandings and practices (p. 13). This way, by being regarded as a central and non-negotiable aspect of modern political life, "security" *appears as* the ground on which the architecture of the inter/national is built upon.

As follows, Dillon (1996) suggests that within the (modern) metaphysical tradition, there is a fundamental quest for a "secure" foundation or principle, an *arche*, that serves as the basis, guiding principle, or starting point upon which everything else supposedly depends. In this sense, for Dillon, "security" constantly appears to us as a fundamental, self-evident, beyond question condition for the existence of (individual and social) life.

We must note, however, that even though there is this construct of "security" which *appears as* a fundamental condition of life, the pursuit of "it" would not merely be a practical concern. Rather, it would constitute a deep philosophical and metaphysical endeavor, shaping the very nature and structure of thought within inter/national political discourse (p. 13). Because of this architecture, much like the maxim "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus"* – i.e. no salvation outside the Church – we could say that in modern inter/national politics, and in traditional security approaches, there are constant attempts to sustain the saying of "no security outside the state; no state without security" (Dillon, 1996, p. 14).

In this vein, Dillon helps us understand that there are ongoing efforts to reduce our political understandings to calculation and to place them on secure, unchanging foundations[282]. This would happen because, as Dillon proposes, "modern politics is a security project" (1996, p. 12) and "the thought within which political thought occurs […] and specifically its conception of truth, is itself a security project" (p. 13). According to him, this perspective finds shelter on reasons that exist prior to, and provide a foundation for, principles and statements of political theorists of the "inter/national."[283] In other words, Dillon suggests that there is a *politics of security*. And, more than that, he provokes us to wonder "Is security the secure foundation […] it is claimed to be?" (1996, p. 18).

This way, if we are to understand that in the modern inter/national "security" appears as a "thick signifier," "a discourse," and a "project," it is possible to observe (at least) four things. First, that there is an intimate connection between conjuring "security" and the yearning for a pristine moment, where a complete healing of existential wounds would take place through a return to a mythical unity (and origin) that never truly existed, "to a lost oneness that never was" (Dillon, 1996, p. 13).

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[282] Dilon reminds us that even though perspectives and appearances are diverse, "we are driven to mastery of the world because of the way that we have expressed puzzlement about it and comported ourselves towards it in search of a certain kind of truth about it, and each other within it. This is what directs us to make the world secure" (1996, p. 19). This way, by looking beyond commonly accepted ideas, clichés in political conversations, and the actions of states, their political elites, and leaders, Dillon proposes that the concept of "security" encompasses a broader range than commonly acknowledged.

[283] Dillon shows that traditional thinkers of "International Relations" constantly attempt to ground "security" – meaning they focus on "what security is; how security might be attained; and which are the most basic, effective, or cost effective means of doing so" (1996, p. 18).

Second, that rather than only reflecting upon whether we accept or not current "(inter)national regimes of security" (Dillon, 1996, p. 14), we must be attentive to how "security" is incorporated to and circulates throughout political discourses and to what happens when one invokes "security" (Huysmans, 1998). Third, that "security" is not simply a noun, but some-*thing* always already becoming that invokes and is invoked, through re-crafting processes (Shepherd and Weldes, 2008), "a proliferating array of discourses of danger within whose […] modern human being is increasingly ensnared and, ironically, radically endangered" (Dillon, 1996, p. 16). And, fourth, that invoking "security" presupposes circumscribing who/what "must be secured," which in turn, requires continuous processes of naming and identification (Campbell, 1998; Edkins, 2005, p. 66).

Accordingly, the matter of "violence" could not be disregarded when reflecting upon the notion of "security" (Krause and Williams, 1997). For the dynamics of "violence" and "security" extend beyond conventional notions related to "inter-state wars" and "civil conflicts" – to encompass oppressive practices, policy routines, legal structures, and the underlying research informing these practices. Therefore, a critical examination of the entanglement between "violence" and "security" became necessary in dissertation, especially in chapter 4.

Taking into consideration the U.S. "Wars on Terrors," it was incumbent upon us to scrutinize how its manifestations of violence – i.e. "security discourses" – served and serve to posit the existence of boundaries borders, limits, identities, and differences to (re)affirm "security" as the imperative concern of supposed monolithic entities – e.g., the USA, freedom-loving people, the world – and to (re)produce their "sovereignty" as the appropriate organizational framework within the "anarchic international system."

This way, it would not be possible to reflect upon "security" in the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" without contemplating how it continuously seeks to outline, engage in and enforce "order" in the inter/national while operating together with a variety of labels – i.e. "national security," "individual security," "global security," "social security," "collective security" etc. In other words, the perspective carried out here understands that those "threats" and "dangers" of "terrorism" as well as those who "must be secured" depend on interpretations and representations.

In so being, the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" resort to *claims of security* which, in turn, rely upon "illusions of permanence" (Walker, 2019, p. 16). They highlight the

need to protect the U.S. interests, to restore a disturbed order, to guarantee the safety of its population, and even the safety of the whole world. Nonetheless, these very claims imply that there is no "security" without a notion of what/who must be *secured* – be it the USA, the "American Way of life," all human beings, "democracy," "human rights," "self-determination," or something that is still going to be articulated (Walker, 2019). Hence, the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" are neither objective, nor given *security* facts (Shepherd and Weldes, 2008). Rather, they rely upon the *politics of ontology* (Campbell, 1998), on the *politics of presence* (Zehfuss, 2003) and on the *politics of security* (Dillon, 1996).

Accordingly, after the reflections made in previous chapters, and inspired by the concepts of "security as discourse" (Weldes and Shepherd, 2008), "thick signifier" (Huysmans, 1998), and the assertion that "modern politics is a security project" (Dillon, 1996, p. 12), my understanding throughout this dissertation revolves around the notion of "*security as a specter*." Due to this, I conceive "security," and more specifically, the "U.S. security," as an elusive, uprooted, and both present and absent specter, framed by the ontico-ontological illusion of presence.

This specter is as ungraspable as the concept of "terrorism." It significantly influences not only the political actions and "Wars on Terrors" of the USA but also disseminates supposedly closed, ever-present truths – of "democracy," "freedom," "justice," and "humanity." It is a specter that paved, paves and most likely will attempt to pave the way for wars, detentions, military coups, mass deportations, torture, bans, and assassinations. More than that, this specter is continuously involved in processes that seek to overshadow or even suppress alternative perspectives to think about political issues.

Indeed, no satisfactory assessment could be delivered here without considering the embeddedness of "security" to concepts such as "sovereignty," "anarchy," "domestic," and "international," and by considering processes of reiteration, ritualization, institutionalization, affirmation, and negation. Rather, my aim has been to reaffirm the perspective introduced in chapter 2, which suggests we maintain a sensitivity to *différance*, (structural) iterability, the interplay of asymmetrical counterconcepts, supplementarity, and to deconstruction being always already on the move.

In other words, this dissertation has been attempting to render less obvious premises taken for granted, and to draw attention to how problematic is the structuration of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" and of its claims in the name of "inter/national (in)security." This way, since the beginning of this work, my focus has lain on examining the supposedly grounded beliefs that constantly attempt to normalize the U.S. foreign policy *textiles* and its "insecurities" regarding "terrorism." Simultaneously, I also have been attempting to show that the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" responses, actions and strategies are problematic and only possible because they claim to be operating in "just," "right," "free," "humane," "democratic" grounds against ontico-ontologically identifiable "terrorist" entities – even if, paradoxically, they all lie on groundless grounds.

Since here the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" are not thought of through an emphasis on mere quantitative assessment of deployment of weapons and military, or a state-centered perspective focused on "*Clausewitzean* wars;" and since interpretation and representation are significant (Edkins, 2002), instead of wondering "what are the most urgent matters of security for the USA?", "how has the USA been dealing with matters of security?" or even assuming that "terrorism is a urgent security matter," in this dissertation, I have wondered: "how have the U.S. foreign policies been invoking 'security'?" More specifically, "how have the U.S. foreign policies been invoking 'security' to deal with 'terrorism'?"; "how is it possible to invoke 'security' to deal with something as elusive as 'terrorism'?"; and "how is it possible to invoke something as elusive as 'security' in the first place?" My (embryonic) answer to these questions is threefold.

First, I do not deny that "the world wants [us] to think like a realist" (Mearsheimmer, 2018, n.p.)[284] or that "the world speaks realism" (Guzzini, 2020, n.p.)[285]. In this vein, even if this dissertation and countless other authors, activists, and scholars question basic assumptions used to justify violent acts and strategies "in the name of security," I understand there are still continuous, powerful and persistent attempts to reify some-*things* as if they were obvious.

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[284] In the original Mearsheimmer (2018, n.p.) states that "the world wants you to think like a realist."
[285] I first heard this sentence on June 26, 2020, during a debate promoted by IRI/PUC-Rio on "race and racism in securitization theory." While contributing to the debate, Professor Stefano Guzzini called our attention to the idea that despite all criticisms we can raise, we must remember that "the world [still] speaks realism." I do not know if this sentence is attributed to a specific work – I searched for it and did not find it in any book or article – and that is why I chose to attribute it to Guzzini (2020).

This way, and second, since I do not understand "security" as fixed and given concept, I do not think it would be possible for the USA to easily identify "urgent matters of security" and, consequently, to transparently suggest how, and in whose name, it has been dealing with these "matters of security" without resorting to authoritative, iterable claims – such as the NSS, EO, State of the Union Addresses, Crime Resource Manuals, Memoranda, Resolutions, Acts, Party Platforms – which attempt to define "security matters" as well as who/what must be secured.

Finally, and third, when I mention the expression "eluding security" I do not only mean that "terrorism" has been eluding the "U.S. security." I also mean that "security" is itself some-*thing* elusive. It is constantly eluding definition, attainment, and a perfect and desirable end.

Take, for example, the following excerpts into consideration:

> History will judge harshly those who saw this coming danger but failed to act. In the new world we have entered, the only path to peace and security is the path of action (Opening Letter, NSS of 2002, p. ii – signed by then-President George W. Bush).

> For nearly a decade, our Nation has been at war with a far-reaching network of violence and hatred [...] This is part of a broad, multinational effort that is right and just, and we will be unwavering in our commitment to the security of our people, allies, and partners. Moreover, as we face multiple threats – from nations, nonstate actors, and failed states – we will maintain the military superiority that has security our country, and underpinned global security, for decades [...] As a Nation made up of people from every race, region, faith, and culture, America will persist in promoting peace among different peoples and believes that democracy and individual empowerment need not come at the expense of cherished identities. Indeed, no nation should be better positioned to lead in an era of globalization than America – the Nation that helped bring globalization about, whose institutions are designed to prepare individuals to succeed in a competitive world, and whose people trace their roots to every country on the face of the Earth (Opening Letter, NSS of 2010, p. i-ii – signed by then-President Barack Obama).

> My Administration's National Security Strategy lays out a strategic vision for protecting the American people and preserving our way of life, promoting our prosperity, preserving peace through strength, and advancing American influence in the world. We will pursue this beautiful vision—a world of strong, sovereign, and independent nations, each with its own cultures and dreams, thriving side by side in prosperity, freedom, and peace – throughout the upcoming year (Opening Letter, NSS of 2017, p. 22, signed by then-President Donald Trump).

> How we respond to the tremendous challenges and the unprecedented opportunities we face today will determine the direction of our world and impact the security and prosperity of the American people for generations to come (Opening Letter, NSS of 2022, p. i-ii – signed by President Joe Biden).

> Ultimately, the foundation of American strength is at home. It is in the skills of our people, the dynamism of our economy, and the resilience of our institutions. A diverse, modern society has inherent, ambitious, entrepreneurial energy. Our strength comes from what we do with that energy. That is where our national security begins (NSS, 2002, p. 31).

> "American democracy had been tested and American democracy had held together" (Biden, 2024, n.p.).

These excerpts, interconnected to a much wider "fabric of security's" claims and practices – that is, entangled to "security" *textiles* – emphasize ideas of action, inaction, mission, continuity, responsibility, ability, capacity, destiny, energy, strength, justice, representativity, and, of course, of domestic/international, inside/outside, here/there, now/then, us/them divides. All of them seem to influence and/or provide the USA with a unique position in defending not only its "own security" but the whole world's.

Also, according to the aforementioned excerpts, the USA is a nation at war with "violence and hatred" coming from multiple "threats," i.e., other nations, non-state actors and failed states. In the same vein, these excerpts declare that, in this tortuous scenario, the USA is *still* committed to the "security" of its people, of its way of life, of its allies and partners. For, according to them, not only is the U.S. *persistent* in its endeavors to promote peace, it is also the best positioned nation to lead the world – of strong, independent, sovereign nations – towards peace. After all, it is declared, responding to today's challenges affects the future of "security." This way, appealing to its strength's foundation, that apparently starts at home, the U.S. "national security" makes a delimitation: "security" could only be attained through *persistent* action.

Other *textiles* invoked throughout this dissertation also reiterate that the USA is a "democratic, sovereign nation" that fights tirelessly its "enemies" and is committed to protecting its "borders" and cherished "values." That it works to "spread freedom" and to protect all freedom-loving peoples that are "at fear." That "terrorists" are essentially bad, and that "terrorism" is carried out by "radically religious people" and comes from "underdeveloped places" linked to "poverty."

These *textiles* also emphasize that the USA aspires to, is capable of, and must promote "interventions." Of course, they do recognize that pain, suffering, deaths and war are deplorable, but, in a way, they still are presented as justifiable in the

name of a "greater good." After all, when it comes to "matters of security" *Either you are with us, or against us* (Bush, 2001, n.p.). And those who are "against us" would be struck by war and represent only collateral damages of a bigger picture – that of a *safe, protected, secure* world.

Actions ←→ Consequences. Ritualization ←→ Reiteration ←→ Institutionalization. It is as if "*the* USA," "democracy," "sovereignty," "freedom-loving peoples," "nonstate actors," "failed states," "terrorists," and "threats" were monolithic entities. It is as if not maintained, followed, and reinforced, these "security" *textiles* would not inhibit bad things from happening. It is as if were the USA to be supported and, of course, not stopped, closure would finally be attained. It is as if "security" *textiles* could offer to fulfill "the longing for the return to a pure and unadulterated form of belonging; a final closing-up of the wound of existence by returning to a lost oneness that never was" (Dillon, 1996, p. 13). At least, this is the professed belief put forth.

In this dissertation, I am, of course, suspicious of these claims. For I understand that "meanings […] are neither static nor final; rather, they are always in process and always provisional" (Shepherd and Weldes, 2008, p. 533). Certainty is constantly reiterated to us, but is it really certain? Here I understand that uncertainties permeate "security discourses," even though they are offered to us as undeniable, unquestionable truths. They exclude, objectify, and abjectify. Far from being only a subjective, groundless, re-crafted name, "security" is embedded in sets of rules (Huysmans, 1998; Shepherd and Weldes, 2008). The play of this "signifier," of this specter, affects and informs "security agendas," and provides claims of uniqueness and unprecedentedness.

This leads us to a secondary question presented in this section's title: "Whose security?". If we are to understand that "there is no 'security' without a notion of what/who must be secured," we must wonder: whose security is at stake in the U.S. "Wars on Terrors?" Is it the "security" of all those who live in the USA? Or is it the "security" of its (legal) citizens? Is it the "security" of the *American way of life*? Is it the "security" of its allies and partners? Is it the "security" of freedom-loving peoples? Is it the "security" of the whole world, since the U.S. *textiles* reinforce it is the only nation capable of leading the world? Is it the "security" of future generations? Is it the "Homeland Security"? Is it the "National Security"? Is it the "security" of its territory? Is it the "security" of its sovereignty? Is it the "security"

of the edifice of sovereignty? Is it the "security" of all human beings (excluding abject humans, of course!)? Is it the "security" of something as elusive as "democracy"? Is it the "security" of peace? Is it the "security" of all of the previous options?

While I cannot provide a definitive answer to these inquiries, I venture to propose that the concept of "security" woven into the fabric of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" is elusive and continuously redefined, beyond our full comprehension. It is some-*thing* constantly rearticulated, some-*thing* that we cannot grasp. It seems to hinge on persistent efforts to distinguish between "what is real and what is necessary" (Walker, 2002, p. 15-16; Campbell, 1998; Zehfuss, 2003; Derrida, 1988).

This way, this elusive sense of "security" relies on assertions of necessity and discrimination (Walker, 2002). It necessitates hyphenation –i.e., supplementation – manifesting as "state security," "physical security," "national security," "territorial security," "American security," "our security," "the world's security," and so forth. In so doing, it operates as a politics of identity (Campbell, 1998) and a politics of reality (Zehfuss, 2003), securing a supposedly monolithic entity, " *the* United States of America" through a complex interplay of "security" dimensions.

This discussion also prompt us to retake an idea I introduced a few pages back: that "the world speaks realism" – which depends on the "real," on the "politics of reality," and hence on the "is" (Zehfuss, 2003). This understanding about how the modern inter/national operates is important because I recognize that the rationalist/realist/traditional thinking of "security" has a pivotal role in introducing, compelling and re-producing dynamics focused on the "domestic," on "sovereignty," and on the "inside," privileging the state above its supplements, i.e. the "international," "anarchy" and the "outside" (Ashley, 1989; Walker, 1997, Martin, 2005; Williams, 2005). This holds true for the U.S. "Wars on Terrors," for we can exhaustively observe how endeavors against "terrorism" claim to speak, think, act on behalf of the USA, of its allies, and on behalf of "a world of strong, sovereign, and independent nations" (NSS, 2017, p. 22).

Undoubtedly, the state is *another* name invoked constantly in political studies. It is commonly associated with keywords such as: agency, autonomy, authority, sovereignty, legitimate violence, source of law, homeland, nation, territory, population, boundaries, and so forth. And even though the state is a

"complex and fluid social organisation" (Martin, 2005, p. 52) within which numerous branches perform administrative, judicial, and legislative activities, whenever we venture at the inter/national, this five-letter-name is summoned as a cohesive, solid entity (Martin, 2005). And it is extremely difficult – if not impossible – to ignore it[286]. On the one hand, the state appears as "an unproblematic rational presence already there, a sovereign identity that is the self-sufficient source of international history's meaning" (Ashley, 1988, p. 231). On the other side, what is offered to us, in opposition to the state, is an "anarchic" world (Ashley, 1988), wherein we cannot grasp agency, authority, sovereignty and all those features I mentioned in this paragraph.

This reproduction of boundaries – of borders, limits, sovereignty – informs and is informed by traditional/rationalist/realist thinking (Klein, 1994; Ashley, 1987; Walker, 2009; Lindahl, 2013). More than that, it reflects Enlightenment's constructs of the subject – especially the Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian constructs "of a self-contained, unencumbered, rational and a priory entity who performs a voluntary act of political contract" (Williams, 2005, p. 23).

Put simply, it conceives the state as a much larger version of a *rational individual* possessing *agency* over their *internal* needs and values. However, according to this conception, upon entering a milieu comprised of other individuals, the subject – or the state – is confronted with an uncertain (anarchic) environment, necessitating engagements marked by either conflict or cooperation (Martin, 2005).

Taking the state as an objectively given entity – which holds legitimate power, sovereignty, and territorial borders, and which administers and execute the will of its population – implies considering any transgressions dangerous (Shepherd and Weldes, 2008, p. 530). Mobility, contestation, different behaviors become threatening, as they can bring – from "outside," and with "outsiders" – crime, diseases, cultural distortions, difference and so forth. In other words, taking those who *must be secured* from "terrorism" as objectively given entities implies considering any transgressions to them dangerous.

This way, because of claims under the banner of "the U.S. security" against "terrorism," Arabs, Muslims, Middle Easterners, im/migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, antifascists and many *others* are considered a "threat" to the U.S. – a

[286] Here, for example, despite my criticism of essentializations, I constantly invoke the United States of America without questioning "its" fluidity.

sovereign state – supposed integrity. Because of the re-production of this perspective of "security," white supremacists are concomitantly considered threats to the U.S. integrity but legal citizens and important voters(!) during elections. Because of the re-production of this traditional approach to "security," that sees sovereignty and territoriality as the markers of statehood (Shepherd and Williams, 2008, p. 530), border control, surveillance, detentions, bans, targeted killings, secrecy… "Wars on Terrors," take place.

As Campbell (1998) masterfully reminds us,

> Security and subjectivity are intrinsically linked, even in conventional understandings. Traditional discourses of international relations maintain that alliance is one where security is a goal to be achieved by a number of instrumentalities deployed by the state (defense and foreign policy, for example). But the linkage between the two can be understood in a different light, for just as Foreign Policy works to constitute the identity in whose name it operates, security functions to instantiate the subjectivity it purports to serve. Indeed, security (of which foreign policy/Foreign Policy is a part) is first and foremost a performative discourse constitutive of political order: after all, Securing something requires its differentiation, classification and definition. It has, in short, to be identified (Campbell, 1998, p. 199).

Instead of a bounded entity, what we can observe are, on the one hand, attempts to logocentrically demarcate –inside/outside; international/domestic; here/there; sovereignty/anarchy; identity/difference. On the other hand, we may also acknowledge continuous contestation, and an undecidable situation (Derrida, 1972), wherein these pairs are not an objective condition, but a space of constant struggle, of shifting groundless terrains (Ashley, 1989; Martin, 2005, p. 56).

What we can observe are political constructions of subjects, objects and abjects – Americans, citizens, the USA, democracy, freedom, im/migrants, Arabs, Muslims, antifascists, white supremacists, "violent extremists," "terrorists," – through an unfinished, unattainable, ceaselessly project (Williams, 2005).

Considering this highly volatile and contested status that surrounds "security," in the modern international, and, of course, in the U.S. "Wars on Terrors," we are always reminded to expect the unexpected, since the rule that seems to never change is that *everything is going to change* (Walker, 2019) – much like Cristopher Wray's (2023) warnings regarding imminent "terrorist threats" to-come. To put it another way, what Walker calls "co-productive oppositions" between notions of permanence and change work in order to enable claims about

"security" through "vague generalities about everything and nothing" for, "much of the rhetorical force and political legitimation expressed through modern discourses of security rests ultimately on this simultaneous appeal to the hard and the vacuous, the precise and the imprecise, the exaction of blood and sacrifice in the name of the grand generalization." (Walker, 1997, p. 63)

In this sense, and as I mentioned before, not only does the term "security" roll off the tongue very often, it also is far from being a clear concept. Given that, "security" is, then, in itself, meaningless. Nevertheless, it is not an empty concept because it relies on a series of accepted and prior visions of what should be secured (Krause; Williams, 1997). "It" is constantly re-filled in, re-defined, re-framed, re-crafted and re-imagined.

For this reason, even if we agree that it may be impossible to establish a universal definition of "security," our work must not stop (Bilgin, 2008), for the "Wars on Terrors" accounts of "security" reveal how their incoherence is closely tied to our incoherent sense of how things are possibly working and changing. By recognizing these incoherent accounts, we have been witnessing persistent operations which strengthen and legitimize violent practices.

Considering this, it is important to acknowledge that these dynamics and structures *persist,* that they keep being *centralized* – in a center without a stable, grounded, definite site. This way, critically thinking "security" involves rejecting rigidity – between the notions of subject and object, and, I would add, the abject – and de-centering prevailing claims about "security".

In this sense, as Booth (2007) puts it, in paraphrasing Robert Cox, "[…] all silences are '*against* some body or *against* some *thing*'" (p. 160). They privilege certain practices and marginalize others. "Security" silences – and noises – cannot be considered natural. Rather, they are political. Envisaging a critical discourse about "security," in this regard, means engaging with contemporary transformations of political life without hurting and destroying "others" and "ourselves" (Walker, 1997).

This way, much like Jenny Edkins (2005, p. 66), who proposes that "becoming a subject always already involves a naming and an identity," R. B. J. Walker (2019) reminds us that

> […] values and identities are highly volatile and contested, so what it means to secure them must be highly contingent, even if rhetorical and political advantages accrue to claims about eternal necessities. Everything changes, but sometimes rapidly, sometimes (very) slowly, even to the point of indiscernibility; so, we counterpose glacial structures and frantic fixes, a universalizing History, and specific histories (Walker, 2019, p. 16).

In these groundless grounds, where attempts to secure "security" take place, ongoing processes of bordering, exclusion, identification, differentiation, and expulsions attempt to secure "security" (Klein, 1994; Dillon, 1996; Yamato, 2021). To do so, and as we observe in the next section, there is the need of not only one type of "outside" and "outsider;" rather, multiple constitutive outside(r)s are required (Walker, 2006a, 2009; Yamato, 2019, 2020).

5.3
Multiple, constitutive outside(r)s

> I am not even sure there can be a "concept" of an absolute exterior.
>
> Jacques Derrida (1972, p. 64).

> Perhaps, there are no two worlds, not even a single world, but only the outside in its eternal flow.
>
> Peter Pál Pelbart (2000, p. 201).

In their attempts to reify what is "right and desirable," the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" *textiles* are always already "engaging in representation" (Bleiker and Campbell, 2016). Because of this, the ethical "poststructuralist attitude" (Bleiker and Campbell, 2016) of this dissertation does lie in paying attention to practices of statecrafting (Doty, 1993; Auchter, 2014). Indeed, we may observe that, in the "Wars on Terrors" *textiles* presented here, *some* – values, peoples, places – have been invited/incorporated "inside" supposedly monolithic, transparent, universal entities – the USA, "democracy," "righteousness," "American citizenry," "us," "freedom loving peoples," "the international," etc. – while others have been cast "out(side)."

With that in mind, we can also recognize that

> Almost all the hard questions of our time […] converge on the status of borders: of boundaries, distinctions, discriminations, inclusions, exclusions, beginnings, endings, limitations and exceptions, and on their authorization by subjects who

> are always susceptible to inclusion or exclusion by the borders they are persuaded to authorize. […] The image of clean lines nevertheless prevails as a regulative ambition of modern political life. We belong here. You belong there. They belong elsewhere. We may let you in. They will be sent home. Everyone must know their place, not just in the hierarchies of status, class and social order, but literally in horizontal or territorial space (Walker, 2006a, p. 57).

This way, simply accepting any dichotomic division would still prompt us to reify the very same divides – those of an "inside" and an "outside" and its supplements. Following a different path, here I recognize that the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" *textiles* are not inanimate, motionless and passive. They are (engaged in) a great battle in which there are simultaneous attempts to sediment and desediment dichotomies such as those of "inside/outside," "sovereign/anarchic," "national/international," "us/them," "here/there," "before/now," "now/then," "humane/inhumane," etc.

Yes, in these *textiles* there are claims of having it all figured out, that is, of identifying and defending what "must be defended" from all those outside(r)s who disrupt "order" and, therefore, must be not invited or let in. And if, somehow, these outside(r)s come "inside," we are told they must be expelled, excluded, discarded or eliminated. However, in struggling to distance myself from the cartesian anxiety (Bernstein, 1983) that unceasingly and desperately longs for grounds, throughout this dissertation I accepted the absence of secure foundations (George and Campbell, 1990; Marchart, 2007) and have been trying to make "facile gestures difficult" (Foucault, 1988, p. 154; Campbell, 1996).

In so doing, I understand that "identity," "difference," and "othering" are neither self-evident, nor unproblematic (Arfi, 2012). More than that, I insist that conceiving them as grounded aspects of modern life allows for military deployments, repression, immigration and refugee policies – i.e., discursive-bombs, discursive-military, discursive-drones, discursive-bans, discursive-detentions, discursive-tortures, discursive-cages, discursive-walls, discursive-assassinations (Fernandes, 2020).

I have also been struggling against Enlightenment's "either/or" blackmail (Foucault, 1988; Bleiker and Campbell, 2016) and, more specifically, against what Ashley (1988) calls "the blackmail of the heroic practice" – as I understand that divides, such as those aforementioned, are not unambiguous and do not hold the

"status of a deep and originary structure" (Ashley, 1988, p. 233). Even so, I pay attention to them, for boundaries, borders and limits (Ashley, 1987; Walker, 2009; Lindahl, 2013), and the metaphysics of presence (Derrida, 1988) pave the way for powerful representations that unceasingly try to convince us that it is possible to apprehend, control and separate what is "inside" and what is "outside," what is "present" and what is "absent," what is "real" and what is "not" (Derrida, 1988; Zehfuss, 2003). More than that, I consider that instead of an "either/or" relationship between "inside and outside," "identity and difference," "sameness and otherness" – and their infinite supplements – it would be better to recognize a relationship of entanglements, of dissemination (Derrida, 1981), of a rhizomatic (Deleuze and Guattari, 2019) contamination (Derrida, 2016): an always on the move constitutive relationship (Walker, 2006a, 2009; Yamato, 2014; 2019, 2020).

According to Henry Staten (1984, p. 24), it is not fruitful for us to restrict ourselves to alternatives of either "form" or "chaos." He suggests that, rather, we pay attention to the "constitutive outside." Through this suggestion, Staten acknowledges that "[t]he notion of a constitutive outside is the deconstructive alternative to the fundamental philosophical concept of form or essence – that is, of unity and self-identity as the most general and inviolable boundaries […] of being and knowledge" (1984, p. 23) He warns us, however, that this position would not represent a "defense of formlessness;" rather, it would pay attention, and be part of, a "regulated overflowing of established boundaries." (1984, p. 24).

Returning to the *textiles* of previous chapters, we may observe that, for Schmitt (2011), there may be *unpolitical* – outlaw, exceptional, absolute enmities in actions, spaces and subjects; for Lindahl (2013, p. 41), there may be the *a-legal* – an outlandish place of strange behaviors and situations; and for Staten (1984), Walker (2006a, 2009) and for Yamato (2019; 2020), there may be, respectively, a constitutive outside, a doubled outside, and double outsiders.

Here, I chose to rewrite specifically Walker (2006a; 2009, p. 23) and Yamato's (2019, p. 220; 2020, p. 16) contributions. This way, with the help of Walker and Yamato, my suggestion is that "terrorism" and "terrorists" hold the negative-asymmetric-iterable-counterconceptual position of *multiple*, constitutive outside(r)s of the USA – and of the modern international**.** To help us reflect upon this, let me first introduce three thoughts that we will revisit by the end of this section.

First, in *Of Grammatology* (2016, p. 181-182), Jacques Derrida says that "if writing is nothing but the 'figuration' of the language [*langue*], one has the right to exclude it from the interiority of the system […] as it should be possible to exclude the image without damage to the system of reality." Second, in *Worlds of Color,* W. E. B. Du Bois (1925) contends that "with every great European empire walks its dark colonial shadow" (p. 423), wherein a double face attitude (p. 425) took place – that where the *use of democracy at home* walked hand in hand with *central authority* and *autocracy towards the colonies* (p. 425). He wonders, though: "What would happen if Europe became suddenly shadowless?" (p. 423). Third, Badredine Arfi (2012), in *Re-thinking International Relations Theory via Deconstruction,* highlights that "no identity can be an identity without being immediately blown up. Identity is always already un-identical to its 'self '; its 'self ' is always differing and deferred from itself" (p. 122).

Following "my" (rewritten) suggestion, I understand that, regarding the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" *textiles,* it is only possible to claim to know/observe/apprehend "terrorism," "terrorists," "threats," "dangers," "enemies" and establish goals and an infrastructure to combat them by simultaneously recurring to (or implying the existence of) its opposites – i.e., who, what and where "terrorism" and "terrorists" are not. This way, paying attention to, and unraveling the notions of, "identity," "difference," "othering," "inside," and "outside" represent a step we cannot neglect here.

Drawing from Doty's (1996) reading of Homi Bhabha, it is possible to elucidate that when we try to *identify,* to establish an "identity" for "the people" of a "nation" – namely, the people "inside" a state – a process termed "double-time" takes place. This process involves conceptualizing these people as pre-constituted elements of a homogenous body politic (a nation, a state), as historical entities endowed with the potency and authoritative underpinnings supposedly intrinsic to nationalist discourse. Concomitantly, these people are also conceived as the outcome of sophisticated discursive strategies, meaning "the people must be presumed as given and at the same time be continually reproduced" (Doty, 1996, p. 239).

I would add that this also happens when we claim to *identify* matters of "security" in the name of some "people," "nation," "state," "continent," or even in the name of the "whole world." This way, this "double time" process holds true for

the *identification* of "dangers" and "threats," such as those of "terrorism" and "terrorists" in the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" *textiles.* For they rely upon the play of elaborated discourses that require us to assume not only homogeneity but also *identifiable* characteristics, such as the geographical location and temporal "development" of both the "USA" and of "terrorism" and "terrorists."

This way, we may observe that there are continuous struggles among patterns of "inclusion and exclusion" that seek closure and attempt to set "unity on the inside and that shift diversity, disruptions, and dangers to the outside" (Doty, 1996, p. 239). Consequently, by taking "national identity," "national values," "national security," "homeland security" – and their supplements – as given, we would ignore problematic elements already at play, such as attempts of closure, of institutionalizing fixed meanings and of blurring the margins.

Indeed, the reader must have already realized that I do also resort to a plethora of fixed meanings[287]. This seem to happen, for example, when I invoke "the United States of America" and attribute to "it" numerous "Wars on Terrors." However, since I understand that instead of clear-cut divides, we must pay attention to the blurred, ungraspable margins, I must stress that, since the beginning of this work, "the USA" is also considered an elusive, multiple, always already in the making institution – nation, state, territory, country.

In other words, not only do I understand that the "outside(r)s" invoked in "the U.S." *textiles* – i.e. "terrorism," "terrorist," "danger," "security," "barbarism," "fear," "authoritarianism," "underdevelopment" etc. – are slippery and, as I show in the next pages, multiple and constitutive; I also consider that the USA "itself" regardless of a declared date of birth and independence – on July 4, 1776 – and claims of being an unquestionable, sovereign, democratic world leader with rightfully established moral-political missions (Bialasiewicz *et al.* 2007; NSS 2002, 2006, 2010, 2015, 2017, 2022) resort to an "inside" that, on the one hand, struggles and only partially succeeds to get fixed, but, on the other, remains "provisional and permeable" (Doty, 1996, p. 240).

[287] While, on the one hand, I recognize it would not be possible to do the contrary, for this dissertation would be written entirely among quotation marks, on the other hand I still believe it is important and possible to highlight that resorting to fixed meanings implies directing our attention towards some places and not to others, and authorizing some policies and not others.

Questioning the existence of a self-evident USA, however, does not imply the eradication of "the appearance of [this] subject or the idea of [its] agency" (Bialasiewicz et al., p. 408, my adaptation). Rather, it allows us to observe how its performativity enacts discrimination (Walker, 2002, p. 7-13) by insisting on holding a center that has no natural site and that keeps being re-fulfilled and re-signified (Derrida, 1978). The U.S. *textiles* – and not only those regarding "Wars on Terrors" – unceasingly attempt to specify what "the world" is, what "the USA" is, what "security" is, what "terrorism" is, what "development" is, what "democracy" is, what a "community" is, while simultaneously remaking the very same "world," and the very same "USA," "security," "terrorism," "development," "democracy," and "community."

As Walker puts it,

> Discriminations enable our accounts of the good, the true and the beautiful, the saved and the damned, the primitive and the modern and the natural and the social, as well as of the legitimacy of the incarceration, the execution, the torture, the intervention, the declaration of war. The capacity to discriminate is not only always necessary, a condition of the most mundane as well as of the most sophisticated social practices, but in some sense always dangerous. It is in the context of politics that the necessities and dangers of discrimination, as well as the need for sustained scrutiny of the conditions under which certain discriminations enact a ground, a starting point, for public judgments, are supposedly most intense (2002, p. 13).

Walker aptly draws our attention to the idea that "the international is *already* constituted through the legitimation of specific forms of inequality" (2002, p. 7). These inequalities are not a novelty though; rather, they operate through many mundane and sophisticated (2002, p. 13) practices of differentiation, categorization, comparison and ambivalent judgements – especially carried out in the name of "order" among "sovereign states" and through the differentiation of "North and "South, "the developed and the underdeveloped," "the central and the marginal," "the civilized and the barbaric," "democratic and failed states," and so forth (2002, p. 7-13).

This way, who/what the "USA" is remains deeply connected with what "it" is not, to "where" it is not and, especially, with what "it" fears (Campbell, 1998), such as "terrorism" and "terrorists." In other words, continuous (re)articulations of "dangers" and the enactment of *foreignness,* identity, difference and othering set

the stage not only for "Wars on Terrors," but also for the U.S. condition of possibility (Campbell, 1998, p. 12; Bialasiewicz *et al*., 2007; Arfi, 2012).

This way, I recognize that the conditions of possibility of the "USA" and of its "Wars on Terrors" lie on a broad spectrum of discursive practices, of *textiles* that are carried out in "its" name and in the "outside(r)s" names. However, even if this seem like a simple, linear, sequential operation, what we face is rather a contradictory situation, where practices take place "in the name of a particular state" that, paradoxically, "does not pre-exist those performances" (Bialasiewicz *et al.*, 2007; p. 406-407). Nonetheless, the significance of assertions regarding what some-*thing* or some-*one* are supposed to be should never be downplayed (Walker 2006a), as they not only incorporate but *enact* the mobilization of armed forces, of border control measures, of what must be considered an "acceptable" social behavior, and of "pre-emptive action" (Bialasiewicz *et al.,* 2007).

Accordingly, instead of conceiving a singular, unequivocal moment and place of constitution – of "the USA," of its matters of "security," of a "War on Terror" or of "Wars on Terrors"– we must have in mind processes of recitation and repetition (Bialasiewicz *et al.*, 2007; Butler, 1993), of change and repetition (Arfi, 2012), of a rhizomatic (Deleuze and Guattari, 2019) contamination (Derrida, 2016), that is, of *différance*, iterability, deconstruction, of counterconceptual iterable structures at work (Derrida, 1966, 1972, 1978, 1981, 1988, 2006, 2008, 2016; Koselleck 2004, 2018). For these processes allow for, and long for, claims of "security" in the name of the preservation of the U.S. "interests" and "identity" (Campbell, 1998). That is why contemplating, speaking of, and confronting – as well as abstaining from thought, silencing or overlooking – matters related to the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" is intricately connected with the (far from self-evident) concepts of "identity," "difference," and "othering" (Arfi, 2012).

If we dive into these notions, we might observe that "identity" generally conveys the idea of *sameness*, evokes a core, foundational, deep, enduring condition, and concurrently portrays a processual, interactive, highly unstable, and fragmented nature (Arfi, 2012, p. 103). "Difference," on the other hand, is usually equated to *otherness*, and to a self-evident position, that of difference between (at least) two things. This way, conventionally, a relational but unequal structure is conceived: where "A" is only "A" because it is not "Z," and in which "identity requires difference in order to be" (Connolly, 1991, p. 64; Arfi, 2012).

However, it is important to bear in mind that, through the "blackmail of the heroic practice" (Ashley, 1988), we have been concomitantly introduced to a supposedly moral, self-evident "identity" – that of the "sovereign, tidy inside" – and to an unwanted, "disciplined ambiguity" – that of the "anarchic, messy outside" (Campbell, 1998, p. 74; Walker, 2006a, 2006b, 2010, 2013). Badredine Arfi (2012, p. 112) highlights, though, that conventional discussions regarding "identity," "difference," and "othering" provide vagueness and lack of coherence – a quality we should nonetheless embrace. This way, rather than promptly accepting these conventional apprehensions – which attribute to "identity" a central role, and to "difference" a marginal, meaningless place – perhaps it is for the better we think of these names as multi-layered, entangled, rhizomatic dimensions, whose "myth of genesis" cannot be apprehended neither spatially nor temporally (Campbell, 1998, p. 74; Deleuze and Guattari, 2019).

Following Arfi (2012), here we re-think "difference" as *différance* and "identity" as an endless play of traces of traces (of traces…). This way, instead of conceiving "difference" as a condition between primordial, self-evident, enclosed "things," we understand "it" as an unlimited and unbounded process – with no clear spatio-temporal origin and end (2012, p. 114-117). "Identity," in turn, is conceived as having an intimate relationship with *différance* – that is, a relation with/of difference and deferral. Or, as Derrida puts it, "[…] an identity is never given, received, or attained; only the interminable and indefinitely phantasmatic process of identification endures" (Derrida, 1998, p. 28).

This movement implies we are dealing with groundlessness; with only provisional processes of *identification*. More than that, it implies that "identity" is a play "out of joint" (Arfi, 2012, p. 117), that is, that "it" does not rely on linearity, homogeneity and teleology. This way, instead of a "closing in itself" process, "identity" can be conceived as some-*thing* unceasingly escaping itself (p. 118). In other words, "identity" is always already vulnerable to an "outside" that postpones and inhibits its closure. Also, "identity" as a play of traces (of traces) allows for instability, blurriness, uncertainty; for "change and repetition" (p. 119), that is, iterability and dissemination. Or, as Arfi (2012, p. 120-121) puts it, "the play of iterability forces identity to remain in a flux of dissemination; it is never able to gather itself for itself, in itself."

Arfi (2012) also reminds us that, conventionally, "othering" is thought of as an *effect* of the interplay between "identity and difference." Nevertheless, since we consider "identity" as a play of traces (of traces) and "difference" as *différance*, "othering" cannot be conceived simply as an effect. Rather, it is understood here as "an originary liability to an originary arrival of the completely other" (p. 126). In other words, here I conceive "identity" as is engaged in an endless process that seeks to secure self-certainty and sameness, and that, in so doing, attempts to immunize itself against the "other" through "difference" (p. 126). However, this attempt of immunization goes hand in hand with autoimmunization – that is, it resorts to a *pharmakon* which "represents evil both introjected [inside] and projected [outside]" (Derrida, 1981, p. 133).

For this reason, "othering" is not conceived as a straightforward outcome; rather, it involves a fundamental aporia to the arrival of the "other" and to the closure of "identity." As a consequence, despite its pursuit of self-certainty, sameness and differentiation from the "other," "identity" is caught in an impossible situation, where its efforts to "secure itself" also contribute to its vulnerability and exposure to the constantly arriving "wholly other" (Arfi, 2012). In other words, "othering" haunts "identity" (p. 127) and survives like a spectral phoenix, through a "double movement of occultation (or erasure) and retroactive constitution" (Butler, 2016, p. 12).

Thinking about "identity," "difference," and "othering" is pertinent here because boundary-producing-political-practices not only operate in their name, but also make them possible. Or, as Campbell puts it, "whether at the level of the body, the individual, the state, or some other articulation […]" we must pay attention to "boundary-producing practices that instantiate the identity [and, I would add, *difference* and *otherness*] in whose name they operate." (1998, p. 73). This way, by conjuring (both inviting and expelling) "insecurity" in its "National Security Strategies," in its "Homeland Security" *apparatus* or elsewhere, the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" *textiles* attempt to demarcate – temporalize, spatialize (Bonditti, 2014) – and to impose closure upon *those who are threatened* (Campbell, 1998, p. 73). In so doing, they are always already contaminated by the arrival of the "other" who "threats" their "identity."

On the one hand, indeed, we can observe calls for *integration* (Bialasiewicz *et al.* 2007) through a "foreign policy" that claims to combat dangers and that

attempts to objectify events and ideas of numerous peoples, communities, countries and regions (Ashley, 1987; Campbell, 1998). These calls for integration concomitantly allow for, and are entangled with, forms of division and subjectivization (Walker, 2006a). More than that, they rely upon attempts to create "a sense of boundedness and fixity" (Walker, 2006a, p. 414), of acceptable behaviors that "fit the american *modus operandi*" (Bialasiewicz *et al.* 2007, p. 414) of not only a "self" but a community, a group – "us" against "them." Walker (2006a, p. 61) conceives these claims of "diversity within unity" as pivotal to processes of subjectivization, which represent

> a specific framing of all relations of universality and particularity, especially through the modern states system understood as the embodiment both of a universally conceived, or at least universalizing, expression of humanity, in the singular, and of the sovereign nation state as the pluralistic expression of particular peoples and cultures […and] a specific framing of the relationship between specifically modern ways of life and all its supposed others, whether this relationship is written as an historical break with the premodern, or as a geographical break with those others, the colonized or other civilizations, who must be brought in" (Walker, 2006a, p. 60).

This way, we may observe that some claims not only set a dichotomic division, but also enact processes of "incorporation" (Bialasiewicz *et al.*, 2007, p. 415) and "subjectivization" (Walker, 2006a). That is how the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" attempts to sustain that "either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists," or that there are "nations that share a commitment to protecting basic human rights and guaranteeing political and economic freedom" (NSS, 2002, p. iii-iv).

On the other hand, however, it is evident that integration, affirmation, constitution and contention (Campbell, 1998, Bialasiewicz *et al.*, 2007) are not the only moves made possible by processes of identification, differentiation and othering. That is why there are also claims such as those which target nations and peoples "that are compromised by terror, including those who harbor terrorists – because the allies of terror are the enemies of civilization" (NSS, 2002, p. iii-iv). This way, we must be attentive to processes of abjuration (Campbell, 1998), of radical exclusion (Devetak, 2005). For the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" not only rely on the simultaneous incorporation of some subjects and their differentiation *vis à vis*

other subjects/objects. Rather, there is the radical exclusion of those treated as abjects, of those who may not be invited in – as they are inassimilable (Devetak, 2005; Balibar 2017) and denied agency (Doty, 1993) – but, nonetheless, have already arrived (Arfi, 2012). We must be attentive, then, to the multiple, constitutive outside(r)s (Walker, 2006a, 2009; Yamato, 2019; 2020) of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors."

Much like (because of) what happens among "identity," "difference," and "otherness," we are constantly led to conceive the world and our experiences as structured through the division of an "inside" and an "outside." In this relationship, while the "inside" represents a pure, plein presence of the order of the "interiority"; the "outside" appears an "accessory," an "auxiliary," a "parasite," an "alien," a pure addition or absence in the order of the spatial, objective "exteriority" (Derrida, 2016, p. 209).

If we are to believe that this arrangement represents accurately what is at play, then the relation between the "inside" and the "outside" would be paradoxical. On the one hand, in this not-at-all-equal relationship, "the outside" would be added to the "inside" but would, contradictorily, represent nothing – as the "inside" to which it is added is already considered a full, self-sufficient presence (Derrida, 2016, p. 358).

On the other hand, however, their relationship would *also* be that of "contamination," of "monstrosity," of "catastrophe," that is, a relation wherein the impure "outside" forcefully and violently introjects itself in an original, immaculate "inside,; a relation wherein there is the "eruption of the outside in the inside" (Derrida, 2016, p. 183) and where the *interior* is modified, denatured, and deviated from itself (Derrida, 2016, p. 192).

And to overcome this catastrophic contamination, to recover the "purity of the inside" (Derrida, 1981, p. 128), a process of restoration, of reconstitution, of recitation of its "original myth" would need to take place. This way,

> In order to cure the latter […] and rid it of the parasite, it is thus necessary to put the outside back in its place. To keep the outside out. This is the inaugural gesture of "logic" itself, of good "sense" insofar as it accords with the self-identity of that which is: being is what it is, **the outside is outside and the inside inside** (Derrida, 1981, p. 128, emphasis added).

But this operation, Derrida (1981) warns, "must call upon the very thing it is expelling, the very surplus it is putting out. The pharmaceutical operation must therefore excide itself from itself." (p. 128). This leads to another catastrophic process, that of violently excluding exteriority, that is, the "outside" and its "threats" and "dangers;" the "outside" and its representatives who, nonetheless, are granted their place "in the very heart of the inside" (1981, p. 133).

Since I do not conceive this either/or arrangement to represent accurately what is at play, I must highlight that the "outside" invoked in the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" owes its supposed attributes – of a spatial, objective, exterior, additional, accessory, parasitic, alien "terrorism" and "terrorist"– to "*différance* as temporalization" and to "*différance as spacing*" (Derrida, 1968; 2016, p. 231). That is to say, that "outside" invoked seems familiar to us because it relies upon the sense of presence of an-*other* through its absence (*différance* as temporalization). Also because the relationship between the "inside" and the "outside" requires "an interval to separate it from *what it is not* so that it can be itself" (*différance* as spacing) (Derrida, 1968, p. 51). This way, "we" – that, in this case, represents the "USA" – acknowledge that "terrorism" is unacceptable, that "terrorists" are radically different from "us," but they are still, in some sense familiar to "us" exactly because "they" are *un*familiar "us," because "they" portray a role that does not fit "ours;" a role that is *not present* in "our" lives but is, nonetheless, present and alive in "our" fears.

As we have already observed in the last pages[288], it is impossible for an "inside" to close in "itself," to suffice without an-*other*. Rather, it is open for, susceptible to the "outside" – whether it likes it or not – which, in turn, inhibits any possibility of an internally absolute coherence. This way, instead of a clearly defined relationship of an addition – that adds nothing but paradoxically infiltrates, denatures and contaminates – we could conceive a relationship where "the outside ~~is~~ the inside" (Derrida, 2016, p. 195). And, if we conceive that "the outside ~~is~~ the inside," we understand that this blurred entanglement is constantly on the move: "[…] keeping within itself the past element and already allowing itself to be

[288] See also chapter 2: Section 2.4.

excavated by the mark of its relationship with the future element" (Santiago, 1976, p. 24; 33-34, my translation)[289].

However, we must not only unveil this relationship of temporalization and spacing in the U.S. "Wars on Terrors." We must ponder over it, that is, we must pay attention to the "exteriority as constitutive of interiority" (Derrida, 2016, p. 557) and the "interiority of exteriority" (p. 558) – to the "Wars on Terrors" as constitutive of the USA and to the USA of/within the "Wars on Terrors." In so doing, "we designate the impossibility of formulating the movement of supplementarity in the classical logos, in the logic of identity, in ontology, in the opposition of presence and absence, positive and negative […]"(Derrida, 2016, p. 558-559).

This way, although there is a "blackmail of the heroic practice" – that is, a "a dilemma, an unhappy 'either/or' choice" (Ashley, 1988, p. 232) – where the sovereign, tidy, inside, identity of the USA would heroically and simply cast "out(side)" undesirable practices and peoples, we may observe that the "sovereign, domestic, tidy inside" and the "anarchic, international, messy outside" hold an intimate, blurred, entangled relationship. And, in this relationship, "terrorism" and "terrorists" seem to hold a negative but nonetheless *constitutive* value to the "positive values ascribed to statist forms of political community" (Walker, 2002, p. 9) invoked in the U.S. *textiles*. This constitutive position, however, is not a monolithic one. Rather, it is (at least) that of double constitutive outside(r)s (Walker, 2006a; 2006b, 2009; Yamato, 2014; 2019, 2020) or, maybe, that of multiple, constitutive outside(r)s. Let me elaborate on this.

According to Walker (2006a), modern, individual "subjectivity" produces its own "exteriority" as "object." This process is exemplified by the conventional conception of "identity/difference," in which "A" is "A" because it is not "Z" but where, nonetheless, "A" requires "Z" in order to be. In the same vein, the USA would be the USA because it is not Mozambique. Regarding the modern inter/national, we could say that this process is exemplified by a "sacred rule," that where "political life must be kept inside" (Walker, 2006b, p. 70). This way, invoking spatial, temporal and legal borders – as well as autonomy, legitimacy, authority, sovereignty, freedom, and many other political values – not only allows for conceiving the "sovereign subject" as a "constitutional, and constitutive

[289] In the original: "[…] guardando em si a marca do elemento passado e já se deixando escavar pela marca de sua relação com elemento futuro[...]" (Santiago, 1976, p. 24).

abstraction" (Walker, 2002, p. 14) but also to *differentiating* it from the "outside" where political life is chaotic, messy, different, and undesirable.

However, in order to maintain this "subject/object" relationship of *differentiation*, Walker (2006a, p. 58) highlights that a deeper process, that of "doubled outsides," is always already at work. Put simply, the differentiation between "subjectivity and objectivity" requires another distinction which takes place between this pair (of subject and object) and something else – "some world outside of itself" (Walker, 2006a, p. 58). That is, we are only able to identify a "sovereign, statist inside" and an "anarchic, international outside" because there is another "outside," a "doubled outside" which does not fit this structure; a place that is worse than an "anarchic system of different states."

In this logic, the USA – a "sovereign, independent, developed" country that is part of the United Nations and is located in the Northern Hemisphere – is the USA because it is not Mozambique – a "sovereign, independent, underdeveloped" country that is part of the United Nations and is located in the Southern Hemisphere. But, more than that, the USA is the USA, and Mozambique is Mozambique also because they are not the *Daesh* – that is, a self-entitled independent state which, nonetheless, is not recognized by the United Nations and is condemned and combatted as a "terrorist" organization. In other words, if we are to allow the "subject" to know itself *vis à vis* what the world must be – i.e., the "object" –, an-*other* "outside" must be excluded. That is why, Walker (2006a) reminds us, we conceive "modernity" as a distinct realm, "as a world apart from all other worlds, from all other ways of being and all other forms of authorization, in space and in time." (2006a, p. 58).

Conceiving the operation of a "doubled outside" (Walker, 2006a) represents a challenge to our conventional accounts of the international. This is due to the traditional presentation of the "international" as a synonym of "the whole world," where "we are all the same, as humanity, but all different, as members of different national cultures: We are the ambivalent people/peoples of the United Nations" (Walker, 2006a, p. 66). And why is this a challenge to our conventional understandings? Because were this to be the undeniable truth, there could be *nothing* "outside" this international (p. 58) – which is not the case.

This also holds true to conventional accounts of *a* "War on Terror" undertaken *by* the USA *after* September 11, 2001. For, traditionally, we are

presented to a specific moment – that of the attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon and September 11, 2001 – to a specific victim – that simultaneously is *identified* as "the USA" but also as the *incorporated* "democratic, freedom-loving world" – and to a supposed specific target – "terrorism," which, nonetheless, is also presented as Al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, Afghanistan, Iraq, Saddam Hussain, the Islamic State, an Axis of evil, and so on.

This way, we can observe that resorting to the *affirmation* of framings such as "inside" and "outside," "sovereignty" and "anarchy," as well as of "universals" – such as "democracy," "freedom," "justice," "human rights," etc. – suggests (and implies) the negative, asymmetric *identification* of an-*other* who is "beyond the limits" of the international (Yamato, 2014; Walker, 2006a, 2006b). It suggests there are *some* who have always already been cast "out(side)" the international, and denied the processes of "internationalization as internalization" (Walker, 2006a, p. 58) and "integration as incorporation" (Bialasiewicz *et al.* 2007, p. 415).

That brings us to another of Walker's (2006b) "sacred rules of the international." According to this rule, no "barbarians" or "non-moderns" are not allowed in, as they are not considered suitable to be granted admittance and recognition into the "modern international community" (Walker, 2006b, p. 70-71; Yamato, 2014). This "double outside" relies upon conceptions of "pre-modern and modern," "state of nature and state of civil society and civilization" (Walker, 2006b, p. 71). Consequently, it paves the way for a "regulative outside" that places "non-moderns" and "barbaric" peoples and places *beyond the limits* of the "international," – that is, beyond the acceptable behavior and supposedly established order. These "double outside(r)s" are not equalized to the "convertible savage," but cast "out(side) the place of the unamendable, unassimilable and irreversible barbarian (Foucault, 2019).

It is also important to bear in mind that the existence of "double outside(r)s" go hand in hand with "exceptionalism", a realm marked by uncertainty, and blurred boundaries – a realm at the crossroads of the legal and the political (Agamben, 2004; Yamato, 2019). In other words, if "double outside(r)s" are inassimilable, unamendable aliens who threaten "our security," the only possible way to deal with them is through the authority that suspends liberties and declares exception (Walker, 2006b, p. 76), i.e., through the "inclusive exclusion of the international exception" (Yamato, 2019, p. 226) which allows for Guantánamo bay, for Abu

Ghraib, for the caging of "im/migrants," "refugees" and "asylum seekers," for the criminalization of social movements, and for "white supremacists" to voice racist demands… all in the name of defending the "democratic right of free speech" while simultaneously suffocating "difference," "otherness," and unassimilable "outside(r)s."

The traditional, certified story – constantly reproduced by many analyses and analysts – is that where we have reached a new *momentum*, where "modernity" has touched every corner of the world, and, because of that, we are one humanity (Walker, 2006a, p. 65). The official story is that either through a "compassionate conservatism" or through the "battle for the soul of the nation," "Yes, we can build back batter, go forward, make America great again and keep America great!" However, as we can observe, the story might be as well that of processes which concomitantly tries to incorporate some into the "modern world" and exclude "all other worlds" (Walker, 2006a, p. 66).

As Walker (2009) reminds us, limits, borders and demarcations could never operate if they were indeed "hermetically sealed" (p. 147). Rather, it is when "internalized universality-within-particularity and particularity-within-universality" meet their constitutive outside(r)s that their performance is the most noticeable. This way, constitutive outside(r)s, although always under attempts of marginalization, are not simply marginal or exceptional. On the contrary, they hold a constitutive role, as "the outside is always somehow inside and the inside is somehow outside" (Walker, 2009, p. 147).

This way, even if we are told "tales of inclusion," we must remember that these very tales are only possible because of the continuous attempts to erase patterns of exclusion (Walker, 2006a, p. 67). In other words, even if conventionally we are led to believe that there is only an "inside" and an "outside," wherein someday clear-cut "identities" might be able to live together in spite of their "differences" – in a world of "unity within diversity" – here I understand that there are some-*things* (some places, some people) who are constantly pushed to the "outside of the international," as they are not considered when the "whole world" is invoked (Walker, 2006a), but who, nonetheless, have already arrived "inside of the international," "inside of the USA" and are a *constitutive part* of it.

This way, claims of "modernity," in the name of an "international" and a "desirable order," claims of "freedom, democracy and justice" in the name of a

"USA," of "freedom loving peoples," of "partners," and of "Western values" require processes of radical exclusion; they require some people and some places to be left behind and "outside" of the "outside." They require the existence of a "double outside" and of "double outsiders" (Walker, 2006a, 2006b; Yamato, 2014; 2019; 2020). And this is significant to us because a considerable part of humanity is cast "out(side)." In this sense, through processes of discrimination, not only is a substantial part of humanity treated as "barbaric," "non-modern," and "alien," they are also considered and treated as something inferior and *other than* human (Walker, 2006a, 2006b; Yamato, 2014; 2019; 2020).

It is important to also point out that although Walker (2006a; 2006b) identifies this process of radical exclusion through the images of the "modern subject," and of the "modern/international," Vanita Seth (2003) presents us another images of radical exclusions that have always already been there. Seth (2003) exemplifies that the "embodiment of radical otherness" (p. 77) could be observed in "the world of Antiquity and the Middle Ages" (p. 75), especially in figures such as people with dog faces, people with tails, one-eyed-creatures, giants, centaurs, satyrs, and so forth (p. 75).

According to Seth (2003), these "at-least-in-part-human" creatures represented the "radical embodiment of otherness" up until the nineteenth century, when they were removed from "the world of men" and reassigned to the "world of mythology" (p. 75). In their place, however, new embodiments of radical otherness were introduced, those who were racialized and attributed to behavioral and anatomical excesses (p. 75). This way, even if their names and appearances changed over time, the asymmetrical counterconceptual iterable structure – of physiological confusion, moral ambiguity, and geographical displacement (Seth, 2003) – remained at play (Koselleck, 2004, 2018; Yamato, 2018).

This world of "double outside(r)s" – that relies upon exceptionalism and radical exclusions – is constantly in need of "scapegoats" (Derrida, 1981; Denike, 2015). Margaret Denike observes that, historically, in order to manage conflicts dissension and violence, a group selects some "surrogates." This way, the causes of disorder, chaos and violence are projected upon these "surrogates," these "scapegoats," these "marked others" (2015, p. 112) who are profiled and targeted, under legal or exceptional measures – and sometimes through lynching – so to avoid

harm to the "security" of a "community" – be it the city, the nation, the freedom-loving world, or the (not so much) whole world.

This allows for an everlasting process of vengeance (Denike, 2015, p. 112), where some people and some places are profiled as "archetypal enemies" (Razack, 2008; Denike, 2015) and radically excluded – either by being expelled or being banned to "the camp" (Agamben, 1998; Razack, 2008; Denike, 2015). However, as we should remember, I posited in the beginning of this section that radical exclusions, such as those of the "Wars on Terrors" are constitutive of the "international," of "subjectivity," of "identity," of the "inside," of the "USA," and so forth – since they are always already vulnerable to the "outsides" that concurrently delay (and are delayed) and deny (and are denied) closure.

That is why constitutive outside(r)s, such as "terrorism" and "terrorists," are concomitantly cast "out(side)" the USA– and of course, the "international" space-time – as abjects, but are, nonetheless, *subjected* to the USA and the "international" laws (Yamato, 2014; 2019), rules and expectations. These abject, constitutive outside(r)s are *subjected* under the "inclusive exclusion" (Yamato, 2019, p. 226; Devetak, 2005) of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" tortures, cages, bans, renditions, persecutions, and assassinations.

As those who hold the negative-asymmetric-iterable-counterconceptual position of the constitutive outside(r)s of the USA, "terrorism" and "terrorists" are (un)becoming "enemies." They are specters of "insecurity" and of "danger" that haunt the U.S. foreign policy. They live on spectrally, not because they are phantasmagoric, untouchable, uncapturable figures, but because upon them are demarcated the blurred lines of exceptional (but) legitimized types of violence (Yamato, 2019, p. 228-229).

They are profiled and targeted, they are lynched and affected by "immigration and refugee" policies, "antiterrorism" acts, "insurrection" acts, discriminatory bans, exceptional suspensions of normality (that last more than twenty years), and so on. Rewriting, once again, an important contribution, that of Yamato (2019, p. 229): "terrorism" and "terrorists," being constitutive outside(r)s to the groundings of the "sovereign, interior identity" of the USA, mark the multiple outsides of the "modern, international, whole world."

The reader might wonder why I do not speak of a "double outside" or "double outsiders." Why do I opt, instead, for the idea of *multiple* constitutive outside(r)s?

Because I understand that referring to doubled outside(r)s repeats the idea of an "inside" for an "outside" and an "outside" for an "inside," but, this time, it implies the existence of a second unwelcome "outside(r)" for the "inside(r)/outside(r)" pair. This way, I understand that if we are to believe that it is not possible to be sure that "there can be a 'concept' of an absolute exterior" (Derrida, 1972, p. 74), how could we impose this double feature on it? Isn't the same true for the supposed "inside"? Don't we constantly observe multiple forces that are constantly engaging in battles – and claim to be speaking – in the name of a "country," a "community," an "ethnicity," or even the whole "humanity"?

Perhaps, the "inside" only partially succeeds in attaining fixity, but remains, nonetheless permeable and provisional (Doty, 1996, p. 240). Perhaps, as Pelbart (2000, p. 201) puts it, "there is only the outside in its eternal flow." This way, if we try to grasp these ungraspable fluid, rhizomatic realms, maybe it would be better to conceive the existence of multiple inside(r)s and outside(r)s.

Having in mind the ideas presented in this section, it is possible now to return to the three thoughts invoked in the beginning of this section. This return, of course, does not bring closure. Instead, it allows for some questions and suggestions. Drawing upon Derrida's (2016) and Du Bois (1925) thoughts, we could wonder: if "terrorism" is nothing but a stain – a spatial, exterior, parasitic, alien – in the U.S. "identity" would it be possible to exclude it from the interiority of the USA? Would it be possible to exclude "terrorism" without damaging the U.S. pure, rightful, tidy "inside"? What would happen if the U.S. became suddenly shadowless? What would happen if there were no "Wars on Terrors" in the equation? Are we to say that with very great, democratic, democratic, rightful world leader – the USA – walks its "terrorist" shadow?

Returning to Badredine Arfi's (2012) suggestion, I would say that the USA cannot be the USA without being immediately blown up; that the USA is always already un-identical to its "self," for its "self" is always immunized and autoimmunized not only from "terrorism" but from itself. In the same vein, I would say that the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" cannot be "themselves" without being immediately imploding in a flux of endless dissemination. This way, I understand that the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" are unlimited, unbounded and rhizomatic processes that rely upon (and bring with them) instability, blurriness, iterability, and dissemination. Instead of a clearly defined relationship between good and evil, what

is left for us to observe is *différance* and deconstruction at work, it is a non-place of differentities – a rhizomatic entanglement of differences and identities – and *out*inside(r)s – a rhizomatic entanglement among outside, inside, outsiders and insiders.

I must say, however that even if we acknowledge the impossibility of clearly defining, dividing and identifying matters, subjects, objects and abjects of security, it is still possible to recognize that authoritative *textiles* like those of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" remain powerful (Klein, 1994). They unceasingly attempt to define identity and difference, and to place some inside, others outside. More than that, they strive to place the unwelcome, alien "terrorist" outside the realm of the acceptable, normal international.

They allowed for Abu Ghraib's and Bagram's existence. They allow Guantánamo Bay to still operate. They allow to direct substantive money and personnel to keep building and policing a wall that blocks those who want to enter the USA; to confine children in small cages and to separate them from their relatives; to return LGBTQIA+ that seek refuge to danger; to equate "antifa" to "white supremacists;" and to increase the number of detentions of people of color. They allow vigilantes to do "justice" with their own hands, even though this "justice" relies on racist, sexist, xenophobic assumptions. This scenario undoubtedly sounds tragic. And it is. Specially because it inflicts suffering, agony, distress, pain, trauma, and grief.

However, as tragic as this scenario might be, I do not think it offers *inevitable* closure. For, as the reader might have noticed, I highlight that in the name of "security" the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" *textiles* constantly *attempt* to/*seek to* pursue closure. Indeed, these *textiles* – groundless, subjective, constantly re-crafted constructs – constantly proceed to offer "both conditions and limits on possibility" (Shepherd and Weldes, 2008, p. 534). In so doing, they seek to delimit "common sense," that is, a non-negotiable, self-evident, beyond question, grounded position – and, thus, legitimize and naturalize a certain metaphysics of presence and reality (Derrida, 1988; Zehfuss, 2003). However, even though as per Shepherd and Weldes (2008, p. 534), some "security discourses" *become* common sense when "they are treated as if they transparently reflect 'the real world'," where "the moment of extreme ideological closure" would take place (Hall, 1985, p. 10), I hold a contrasting perspective.

Instead of observing a "moment of closure," or the pure establishment of "common sense," "identities" and "differences," I notice deconstruction at work. Instead of closure, I acknowledge that U.S. "Wars on Terrors" *textiles* are always already becoming – they are difficult to promote, they are constantly questioned. They are held through fragile, rhizomatic, contaminated, spectral claims. Their outside is always already the inside – "the outside ~~is~~ the inside" (Derrida, 2016, p. 195).

Indeed, I observe *attempts* to offer closure, common sense, no-brainer positions. But, if there was closure, there would not be accusations, protests, criticism, disapproval. There would not be resistance. They operate as if they were not resisted, though. Hence the need for rituals, repetitions, institutionalization (Walker, 2019); of boundaries borders and limits (Ashley, 1987; Walker 2009; Lindahl, 2013); of radical intertextuality (Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams, 2015); of asymmetrical counterconceptual relationships (Koselleck, 2004, 2018); of performativity (Ashley, 1987; Bialasiewicz et al., 2007; Butler, 1993; Campbell, 1998); of precarity (Butler, 2016); of the politics of ontology (Campbell, 1998); of the politics of reality (Zehfuss, 2003); of the metaphysics of presence (Derrida, 1988); and, of course, of a citationality, of a "iterability of the mark" which "is neither an accident nor an anomaly" but that thing "without which a mark could not even have a function called 'normal'" (Derrida, 1988, p. 12).

This way, I conceive the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" as tortuous processes not only for those they affect – detainees, "refugees," people of color, children, LGBTQIA+ etc. – but also for those attempting to implement, maintain, and sell them. In the name of "security," ideals of social order, static entities, identities, and places are offered. In the name of "security" we are handed over an *arche* that attempts to "secure security" as an unquestionable condition for the existence of life (Dillon, 1996). "No security outside the state;" "no salvation outside the state," "no state without security." It is as if unsurmountable, unescapable, unsurpassable limits existed.

However, critique is already there; resistance too (Hirst, 2015) – may they be in the form of protests (like those of 2017 against Executive Order 13769, or those against Breonna Taylor and George Floyd's deaths); of reports (Amnesty International, 2002, 2006, 2022, 2023; IRC, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2002, 2011, 2022; UNHR-OHC, 2022); of memoirs (Slahi, 2015); of documentaries

(Morris and Feinman, 2008); of "Poems from Guantánamo" (Falkoff, 2007; Ormond, 2023); or of academic writings (vastly invoked here). Every-*thing* is always already becoming, re-crafting, and being re-crafted (Shepherd and Weldes, 2008; Doty, 1996). Reifications, as powerful as they might be, are constantly at war with critique. That is why, I have been trying to say, "security" is always already unfamiliar within the U.S. "Wars on Terrors." It is elusive – as elusive as "terrorism."

5.4
The elusiveness of a conclusion

Seeking closure is a pivotal part of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors." It happens through affirmations, negations, institutionalizations, inscriptions, proclamations, declarations, demarcations, prescriptions, abjurations, incorporations, radical exclusions, repetitions, remembering and forgetting. It happens through the imposition of rules and exceptions. It happens in the name of "security." It happens through attempts of casting "out(side)" constitutive outside(r)s – be they Arabs, Middle Easterners, Latin Americans, Africans, South Asians, Muslims, antifa, white supremacists or many *others* that supposedly do not fit the "American ideal behavior."

Instead of attaining closure, though, the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" are engaged in battles – and are, themselves, a battle – that reach no end. Among vast expressions, such as protests, accusations, criticism, and disapproval, the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" face resistance. They are always already becoming, as they hold no central, established foundation and, concurrently, are difficult to promote and constantly questioned. This way, instead, we may draw our attention to the groundless grounds upon which "Wars on Terrors" rely.

These groundless grounds call upon *present time* and *pure presence* which, nonetheless, encompass a past that has not passed yet and a future to come. They also resort to claims of precision that discourage questioning and perform the re-crafting of "identity and difference," "inside and outside," "right and wrong," "security and insecurity" – the list goes on. They turn to the ceaseless conjuration of negative-asymmetrical-counterconceptual-iterable constitutive outside(r)s; a

conjuration which concurrently invites and expels, which immunizes and autoimmunizes, both the USA and its constitutive "outside(r)s."

This way, if we analyze how "terrorism" appears in the U.S. textiles and how "wars" are waged against "it," we can observe *différance* – endless differentiation and deferring – and deconstruction on the move. We can observe the fragility of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" *textiles* and their failure in a search for closure. However, paying attention to *textiles,* to *différance* and to deconstruction on the move does not mean we only reach out and reflect upon words, names, naming, speeches and (ugly, pathetic, offensive) adjectives.

On the contrary, it means we can pay attention to how places – either in Central America, in Latin America, in the Middle East, in the African continent, in North America, or in Asia – have been directly feeling the power, the impacts, and the materiality of process of identification, differentiation, division, hierarchization and so on. For they have violently witnessed their governments being overthrown, their territories and homes being invaded, and their infrastructure and people being bombed – all in the name of legal, lawful, justified and surgical interventions which *only* targeted "terrorists." It means we draw attention to how numerous people – scapegoats, surrogates, marked others – have felt the U.S. discourses: their discursive-PATRIOT Act, discursive-Countering Violent Extremisms, discursive-bombs, discursive-military, discursive-drones, discursive-bans, discursive-detentions, discursive-tortures, discursive-interrogations, discursive-cages, discursive-walls, and discursive-assassinations.

As Shepherd and Weldes (2008, p. 533) put it, states "perform violence, but violences, in the name of security, also perform states." This way, I would say, the USA performs violences in the name of "Wars on Terrors," but the "Wars on Terrors" also perform the USA. In this vein, in the name of the "U.S. security," of the "state security," in/securities, subjects, objects and abjects are concomitantly re-crafted through processes of naming, identification and differentiation. These processes unceasingly attempt to craft "identities" of im/migrants, protesters, detainees and also of the USA, again and again. Subsequently, claims about "security" are meaningful and sensitive and they cannot be disconnected from the claims about who "we" think "we" are and how "we "might act (Walker, 1997).

The *textiles* I paid attention to throughout this dissertation highlight origins, dangers, threats and suggest optimal countermeasures to secure the "security"

(Dillon, 1996) of the USA. Do they ask, however, "what happens when we do this"? (Huysmans, 1998). I understand they actually do, but, in so doing, they offer a simplistic assumption: that "insecurity" will, somehow, vanish if the USA persists in its endeavor to eliminate "terrorism" and "terrorists."

And "why is it a simplistic assumption?" – the reader might ask. Because these *textiles* do not take into account how their recommendations of a world protected/safe/secured from "terrorism" imply detentions, tortures, bans, returns, removals, wars, military interventions, assassinations, and radical exclusions. And even if they take the existence of these violent actions into account, they do not consider them a part of the problem; rather, all these violences would be part of the solution. Any reminiscent mistake, and pain inflicted would only be collateral damage.

In other words, if having "security" requires torturing, banishing, detaining, suffocating social demands and radically excluding unassimilable outsid(er)s, so be it! And, yes, we may feel astonished, enraged, offended, incredulous, and/or sorrowful about what this fragile, groundless, yet powerful structure allowed and allows for. These reactions may surface when we pay attention to these "pre-emptive" – racist, misogynist, xenophobic, asymmetric, excluding – actions in the name of the USA, of its "security," of its "citizens," of "democracy," of "freedom-loving peoples," of "innocent victims," of "partners," or of the "whole world."

In these ceaseless battles, Presidential administrations, Security *apparatuses*, Executive Orders, National Security Strategies, military interventions, detentions, deportations, bans, criminalization, and many other *textiles* identify, differentiate, target, detain, torture, deny agency and radically exclude some places as "terrorism safe havens" and some people as "international terrorists," "domestic terrorists," or "terrorists in the making." Much like Balibar (2017, p. 29) asserts, these attempts of closure – i.e., the pursuit of "borders" – represent the U.S. "undemocratic condition of democracy." And, in this process, the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" are (auto)immunized with, and haunted by, their *differentities* and *outinside(r)s*; by the elusiveness of "security" and, therefore, the elusiveness of "terrorism."

6
Concluding Remarks

Whenever we attempt to make sense of contemporary international politics, one of the first impressions might be that there is an overwhelming amount of things happening simultaneously. And, of course, as scholars of International Relations, we are frequently challenged to address this complexity. These challenges are encompassed by many questions, such as: How should we conceptualize, articulate, and discuss these numerous phenomena that seem both unprecedented and strangely familiar (Walker et al., 2018)? Where should we begin our analysis? How can we distinguish between sound political judgment and mere reiterations of long-standing narratives? This is undoubtedly a daunting task, as we are encircled by influential interests and their political imperatives, prevailing epistemologies that perpetuate the notion of an inevitable continuation of state conflicts, and frameworks that both confine and define authoritative knowledge. Our capacity for imagination appears constrained (Walker, 1993; 2017; 2018; Butler, 2018), yet it also seems to strive for creativity.

Even though some topics are under the spotlight in the last few years – such as "migration / refugee crisis;" "China's rise as a world power;" "Venezuela's democratic crisis;" "the rise of populism;" "global warming;" "the dangers of the alt-right;" the "COVID-19 pandemic;" the "Antifa" movement; the "Black Lives Matter movement;" the "U.S. Presidential elections;" the "U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan;" "the Russian invasion of Ukraine;" to name only a few – we are still (and constantly) confronted with those questions I just highlighted: what should we think, write and talk about *first*? How could we make a good political judgement about what is going on?

Unfortunately, neither could we deal with everything that is going on in only one written work, nor could we do this alone, for, as Barthes (1977, p. 4) puts it:

> We know that a text does not consist of a line of words, releasing a single "theological" meaning (the "message" of the Author-God), but is a space of many dimensions, in which are wedded and contested various kinds of writing, no one of which is original: the text is a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture.

Regardless of the difficulties we may face, we must challenge the limits of our imagination uninterruptedly, for otherwise we will just remain comfortable with our familiar frameworks and, consequently, pay little (or no) attention to their effects (Wibben, 2019). Accordingly, critically doing, thinking, and writing international politics involves an exercise which has political effects. This way, framing and drawing attention to some particular issues (and not to others) make us political actors (Wibben, 2019). It is important, then, to highlight that, under these circumstances, critique comes hand in hand with authority, since its procedures can be a source of change (Austin, 2019). Likewise, we are challenged to think about "both unity and difference differently, to transform our understanding of transformation and stasis, rather than to reproduce the same old oppositions […]" (Walker, 2018, p. 5).

That being the case, we must ask: How can we make a different critique? Be it about social, political and / or economic (re)ordering and denaturalization, "[…] critique must become kinder in its engagements and sharper in its targets. It must renounce the specter of totalities and their futile denunciation – those old images of neoliberalism, fascism, and nationalism – and instead, subvert from within" (Austin, 2019, p. 14).

Having these ideas, dilemmas and provocations in mind, in this dissertation I argued that we should challenge ourselves in order to debate, to dispute and to complicate accepted understandings of "terrorism," of "foreign policy," of "security," and, of course, of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors," even though there are considered to be exhaustively studied. This way, this work attempted to complicate such understandings and to reflect deeply upon what they "might mean – and for whom" (Wibben, 2019, p. 11).

In this dissertation, I paid –and drew – attention to the elusiveness of both "terrorism" and "security" in the U.S. foreign policy. In so doing, I suggested that this condition is pivotal for the USA in invoking, promoting, maintaining, and declaring "Wars on Terrors." However, I acknowledged that instead of inanimate, motionless and passive "wars" waged against "terrorism" and "terrorists," what we can observe are endless battles that seek closure, reach no end, but are, even so, powerful.

The U.S. "Wars on Terrors" rely upon (structural) iterability, asymmetrical counterconcepts, *différance*, supplementarity, the metaphysics of presence, the

politics of ontology and the politics of reality. Their *textiles* invoke, declare, prescript, institutionalize, abjure, exceptionalize and radically exclude. More than that, they conveniently remember and project a past that has not passed yet and a future to come; and conveniently forget all the pain inflicted in those detained, tortured, deported, returned, and assassinated – whether at Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib, Bagram, blackholes, behind and across border walls, in cages, in the streets or even at home. All in the name of "security" and against "terrorism."

However, through rhizomatic, disseminated, contaminated processes with no clear beginnings and ends, the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" not only provoke discomfort – to their multiple constitutive outside(r)s –; rather, they face discomfort as well. In the impossibility of attaining closure, they continuously stumble upon their own rugged, fragile, groundless grounds.

To come to these understandings, embryonically proposed in Chapter 1 and reached out throughout this whole dissertation, in Chapter 2, I dealt with an endless chain of remittances – i.e., ideas, problems, [quasi-]concepts, notions – valuable to this work, such as "terrorism," "foreign policy," "deconstruction," "iterability," "*différance*," "supplement," "asymmetrical counterconcepts," "structural iterability;" the U.S. recent endeavors against "terrorism;" as well as with a theoretical-conceptual approach engaged in resist settled truths and oppositions. In this first step, my aim was to reach out to a literature that would help me guard against pure presence/absence, to draw attention to the ungraspable traces of limits, to beware of continuous attempts to asymmetrically discriminate against an-*other* and to understand that every-thing can be subject to fission. This way, this chapter provided this work an important lesson: that even if we face discomfort, we must *interpret interpretations more than we interpret things*, and that, if we do so, it is possible to de-center ready-to-hand dangerous discourses.

Then, in Chapter 3, I proposed a reflection upon the impact of conceiving "terrorism" and "terrorists" through "ontico-ontological" and "hauntological" perspectives. After that, and in order not to reinforce the same old boundaries that pay attention only to what took place after September 11, 2001, I looked for *traces* of the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" during the 1980s and the 1990s. To do so, I analyzed major documents – three National Security Strategies and two FBI Law Enforcement bulletins. This way, I drew attention to the "the appeals that make come […] what is not present in the present moment of the call" (Haddock-Lobo,

2011, p. 81), to the attempts of conjuring – inviting and exorcising a "an evil-doing spirit, a specter, a kind of ghost who comes back or who still risks coming back post mortem" (Derrida, 2006, p. 59).

After visiting some *traces* I used to take for granted in my research, in Chapter 4, I moved "back" to the 21st century and looked into more detail to the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" violences through only three – among many – images of "terrorism": those of "Muslims, Arabs and Middle-Easterners as essentially terrorists;" of "im/migrants and refugees as terrorists in the making;" and of both "antifa and white supremacists as domestic terrorists."

In this chapter, I maintained that "war," whether resisted or not, is not an action of "living forces upon lifeless masses" (Clausewitz, 2007 [1832], p. 16) or upon monolithic entities. In so doing, I highlighted that "war" violates bodies, families, territories, infrastructures and supposedly "universal human rights." This way, in this chapter, and in this dissertation, not only did I pay attention to how asymmetrical demarcations can come to life, but, especially, to how they allow for violent consequences. I also suggested that even when waged against "domestic terrorists" like "white supremacists," the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" not only remain paving the way for the perpetration of violence against other minorities – such as the black population – but also seem to conveniently forget they claim to expel those who, paradoxically, are still accepted "inside" – as citizens, voters, and carriers of free speech rights.

Finally, Chapter 5 represents the last effort in showing that my suggestion of *persistent, haunting, elusive* "Wars on Terrors" makes sense, that is, that *différance*, structural iterability, hauntology and the endless play of the supplement are always already on the move and at work. In other words, in this chapter I paid attention to boundary-producing-political-performances – "foreign policies" – especially those regarding "security as discourse." More than that, I suggested these "foreign policies" held and hold an important place in the USA, as they attempt to emphasize a supposed rigidity and immutability of particular re-presentations, and eagerly reiterate the supposed obviousness of its "Wars on Terrors."

In this chapter I also insisted that re-invoking "unprecedented but oddly familiar" claims – in the name of security, identity, and a supposed "sovereign, tidy, inside" against insecurity, difference, and an "anarchic, messy, outside" –, is the condition of possibility of the USA – as a self-evident, unquestionable, sovereign,

democratic world leader with rightfully established moral-political missions – and of its "Wars on Terrors." More than that, I acknowledged that these representations require divides such as domestic/international, inside/outside, identity/difference and relies upon those who the USA claims to expel but have already arrived: multiple constitutive outside(r)s. More than that, I argued that not only has "terrorism" been eluding "security," but that "security' is elusive in itself. All of that because deconstruction has always already been happening.

This way, regarding the question proposed in Chapter 1 – What is it about the "War on Terror" that provides a persistent narrative that keeps structuring the terms of the US foreign policy during the 21st century? – I maintain my initial twofold thesis that, instead of a "War on Terror," we witness blurred yet plural and powerful, "Wars on Terrors." I also maintain that the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" benefit(ed) from images of multiple, "faceless" and "de-territorialized" constitutive outside(r)s – those being not only those presented in Chapter 4, but many "others" to which our attention should be drawn in future opportunities: Indigenous Peoples, the Black enslaved population, the poor white servants (Irish, Scottish, Germans), Suffragists, Latin immigrants, and so on (Said, 2007; Zinn, 2015).

Finally, my thesis stands with regard to the idea that the U.S. "Wars on Terrors" have been "eluding security" not only because "terrorism" is elusive, but because "security" is, itself, elusive. This way, I reassert that neither would it be possible for the USA to claim to identify and combat "urgent matters of security," nor would it be simple for it to suggest how it has been dealing with the "terrorism" without resorting to authoritative, iterable, yet fragile, declarations – such as National Security Strategies, Executive Orders, State of the Union Addresses, Crime Resource Manuals, Memoranda, Resolutions, Acts, Party Platforms, etc.

War, security, insecurity, inside, outside, insider, outsider, domestic, international, sovereignty, anarchy, identity, difference, *différance*, sameness, otherness, here, there, before, now, then, friend, enemy, democracy, freedom, justice, humanity, foreign policy, boundaries, limits, contamination, dissemination, deconstruction, Arabs, Muslims, Middle Easterners, Latin Americans, Africans, Asians, North Americans, Americans, antifascists, white supremacists, United States of America. Either within or without quotation marks, these and countless other specters haunt – obsess, terrify, torment, startle, marvel – the U.S. foreign policy and its persistent, yet elusive, "Wars on Terrors." In the same vein, these,

and countless other specters are haunted – expelled, unwelcomed, tortured, banned, condemned, detained, assassinated, radically excluded – by the U.S. foreign policy and its persistent, yet elusive, "Wars on Terrors."

I must say that even after this extensive analysis, I conceive no possibility of closure – either for this dissertation and to the U.S. "Wars on Terrors." This way, like Clarice Lispector (2012), I remain scared as the next instant of these violent "Wars on Terrors" remains the unknow; an instant-now already gone, that has become a new instant-now, also already gone. This way, to the question I posed in Chapter 3 – i.e., "Will I be able to grab hold of the U.S. 'Wars on Terrors' – a task forbidden by its very nature?" – the answer sadly remains "no."

However, the position I hold is not that of a project that failed, and of total possibility of inaction, but that of a bittersweet outcome: that of considering the next instant now of the "Wars on Terrors" as a possibility to not surrender, of not taking abstractions for granted. We may persist, even if our path is that of slippery, groundless grounds and of an open-ended pursuit of denunciation.

This way, it remains to us to keep working on shakier grounds, and to hope for seismological movements to never stop. Beyond this, it remains to us to be attentive to political-institutional structures, their practices, and performances so that we can defy the licenses conceded to and cultivated in prevailing forms of subjecthood. This entails a commitment to unwavering attention, even to the tiniest details; a refusal to tolerate hierarchies and violence; and, most crucially, a proactive stance against fostering ignorance and indifference to one's own embeddedness in those dynamics.

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