Fri, 4/17 8:56AM • 6:16

**SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

afghanistan, trope, afghan women, book, racialized, ways, policies, queer, crux, discourse, men, representation, colonial, general, western, women, status, misrepresentation, iraq, anti racist

00:05

The book came out of my PhD, which I started about nine years ago. And at the time, I was interested in the war on terror as everybody was. And specifically, I was interested in how Iraq had been spoken about in the media, how it was presented. And when I started doing my research, I realised that there was a lot on Iraq, but the longer war on Afghanistan had relatively little written about and spoken about. So that was, why I got interested in it. I was wondering why it seems relatively shrouded in mystery, why people are not talking about Afghanistan, what actually was going on, and what kind of knowledge production was going on with respective Kurdistan.

00:53

There's been excellent work done about knowledge production when it comes to the east work, but I'm problematically calling the But you call the global south or the third world or any such problematic term. And the crux of that is, how is the other the east, the person who belongs to the east, been represented to the outside world in this case? How is the Afghan subject being represented to the west? And what does that representation enable? What kind of things does it legitimize? What policies are produced? And how is that subject enacted on? That is what I'm looking at when I look at knowledge production and cultivation about Afghanistan, Afghanistan occupies a distinctive place in the Imperial imagination, because of its particular history. It was never fully colonized. by that. I mean, that wasn't a fully institutionalized colonial apparatus the way that was in India, but that doesn't mean that that weren't quite invasive colonial encroachments on Afghanistan. And the fact that Afghanistan was never brought into the remit of empire proper meant that The way it was engaged with was quite distinctive. I call this in the book, Afghanistan's quasi colonial status. So how it was kind of, but not quite a colonized entity. And that led to a host of different practices and policies towards Afghanistan back in the 19th century, but this continues on in the 21st century. And that lineage is something I trace in the study of Afghanistan. The book walks through some of the core tropes that get parroted in the media and an Anglophone discourse about Afghanistan.

02:33

Generally, one of the core tropes is the desire to save Afghan women. In some ways this particular trope of Afghan women needing saving is similar to others that we've seen, and lots of people including Gayatri Spivak, and Chandra Mohanty and Sharon Razzaq have delineated the ways in which the Muslim woman but the Third World woman, more generally is seen as less able to look after herself and how this leads to Western intervention and protection offered by Western forces, and how that this is a problematic trope. And it does quite a lot of damage to the lived worlds and the realities of the women. So in this case, Afghanistan is quite similar to other third world spaces. But then the book also looks at ways in which I've done is done this particular difference. So for instance, it looks at how the men in Afghanistan are engaged as either lawless tribes, so violent men who need to be contained, but who don't really follow any government or any structure or as pathological queer, sada misers. So there is discourse about posh to males, how they basically are interested in sodomising young men because they don't have access to women. So they're queer terrorists. They're not gay because they don't follow that but they're very aggressive and need to be contained and are just dangerous. And perverse. So the the representation of men is quite different, quite particular. Then there's also stuff on the Afghan state, how it is a failed state, it has failed its people, and how basically we need to go in there a nation build and get institutions working and rescue it from its corrupt fragile status.

04:21

So the book looks at Afghan women, Afghan men, the state in general academic and policy discourse on Afghanistan. And sometimes it shows how Afghanistan is like any other third world place, and sometimes how it's quite distinctive and occupies a particular place in the Imperial imagination, as we've seen in recent months through the Washington Post exposition on Afghanistan. And even more recently, with the collapse of the suppose at peace deal of afghanistan continues to be portrayed as a disaster for the international community, for the for NATO in in particular, but in general for the West. And this ties into some of its earlier representations. As a graveyard of empires, that Afghanistan can never be fully captured or controlled, because it's so wild, and it's so unruly. So the book tries to draw implications out of this. It shows how that this is not only a mess misrepresentation, but that is dangerous and false misrepresentation that leads to quite catastrophic policies on the ground.

05:21

But there's more general and wider implications that come out of this project as well. It looks at how Western intervention is basically built on racialized assumptions, and that we, as scholars and activists need to start challenging this. It calls for more anti racist solidarity programme both at home to combat the far right, but also externally to look at the ways in which not only our politicians, but we are implicated in upholding a globally racialized and unequal order. And that I guess, is the basis of a more sort of blanket recommendation, but the crux of the concern The book remains Afghanistan and how it's been misrepresented and how that has done immense damage to the people to their life ways and to their worldviews.