

Closing the Neoliberal Gap: Risk and Regulation in the Long War of Securitization

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First published: 30 November 2010

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2010.00823.x>

Citations: 24

Abstract

Abstract: When US military commanders refer today to the “long war”, they could more instructively refer to the “long war of securitization”, involving both practices of war and reconstruction that have always been based on a therapeutic logic of preemption and an endgame of protection from global economic risk. Since the early 1980s, the centrepiece of US foreign policy has been the securitization of the Persian Gulf region, with the newly created United States Central Command (CENTCOM) given the task of effecting a grand strategy that has subsequently been consistently based on two interrelated tactics: first, the discursive identification and positing of the Persian Gulf as a precarious yet pivotal geoeconomic space, essential to US and global economic health; and second, the enactment of a dual military–economic securitization strategy to secure, patrol and regulate designated “vital interests” in the region. With the rhetorical power of “risk management” perhaps more palpable today than ever, this paper reflects on the neoliberal discourses of “risk” and “regulation” that sustain a “long war” in which the perennial potentiality of a volatile global political economy necessitates securitization by US military force.

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