

***Knowledge Discourses and International Peace and Justice**
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In this paper, I critically examine the social construction of knowledge and the media coverage of international peace and justice. The main focus will be on three case studies: global violence and Islam; Iraq and international relations; the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In my focus on these case studies I explore the global socio-economic, political and historical links between dominant discourses and continually evolving complex structures of power and resistance, racialization processes, and capitalist class inequities. My examination includes a look at US foreign policy, its impact on international peace and violence, and the role of American mainstream media coverage in making the unthinkable accepted and tolerated. My interest in these case studies is to examine and consider some of the most important factors that come into play which constitute the biggest obstacles to achieving real peace and justice. My main argument here is that the US, with its capitalist/imperialist foreign policy, to a great extent, is hindering rather than contributing to international peace and justice. I further argue that in their bias coverage of international events and “issues”, American corporate media are also contributing to violence and injustices by legitimizing the aggressive role of the US internationally. In the first section, the analytic framework, I describe the elements underlying my analyses and address my first case study, global violence and Islam. In the following section, I deal with my second case study, US foreign policy and the invasion of Iraq. Subsequently, I address the impact of discourses in the mainstream American media. I then focus on the changes in American foreign policy and end my paper by discussing the

role of the US in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. My discussion of all these case studies is done in the context of international standards and principles pertaining to the issues of peace and justice.

Analytical frame work

In my analytical framework, I consider four key areas:

- 1) The hierarchically-based structure of the global capitalist economy, its concentration on the maximization of wealth, its class, race, and gender links, its origin back to 1492 and its colonial ties (see the analyses of dependency, post-dependency and political economy theorists, examples: A. G. Frank, 1975; S. Amin, 1976; E. Wallerstien, 1974; H. F. Cardoso and Faletto 1979; Marx and Engel, 1960; Marx, 1961; and others). Analyses of imperialist aims should also include policies, agreements, and links established by the former colonial powers, most notably Britain and France. The Sykes-Picot secret agreement of 1916 (see the discussion provided in S. Hadawi, 1979) led to the fragmentation of the Arab homeland into colonial nations for the benefits of the above countries. The Balfour declaration of 1917, along with the formation of strong ties between British imperialism and Zionism, gave rise not only to the creation of the state of Israel at the expense of the Palestinians but also to the maintenance of a violent and racist system, particularly with respect to its treatment of the latter, which is similar to that of the former apartheid regime of South Africa. The maintenance and protraction of the state of Israel with its racist and discriminatory policies towards the Palestinian people, together with the occupation of Palestinian territories, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip since 1967 should also be seen in

the context of the US-Israeli economic and military relations starting from the 1950s to the present. I will refer to some examples that will shed light on this point later on in my paper (for a detailed discussion on the above points and for further sources see my unpublished MA research paper 1989). Furthermore, the role that Israel has been playing, both historically and currently, in furthering US capitalist interests in the region should also be considered. One very important example of such a role is the containment of communism and an Arab nationalist movement, as well as, more recently, an Islamic resurgence from spreading in the region as it threatens vital US economic interests in the area (see for further detail the work of Chomsky, 1984 and 1989). It is important, then, to consider such a background with regards to the involvement of imperial powers, first Britain and France and more recently the US with its favourite state, Israel (which has been following a state-sponsored terrorism), in order to understand the resistance of Palestinians and other Arabs both at the collective and individual levels, as well as the manifestation of violence by 'suicide bombers' and some Muslim extremists, both abroad and in the region. While this background helps us understand and shed more light on the current violence committed by both sides, Palestinian and Israeli, it does not however automatically lend justification, especially for these extreme acts, and particularly when it results in the killing or injuring of innocent civilians. Because of length constraints, I will not expand any further on this but will return to it later by focusing mainly on critiquing current US foreign policy and show that instead of contributing to world peace and justice the opposite occurs. In referring to the rest of the areas that are part of my analytical framework, I will spend a bit of time addressing the current

hostility and antagonism towards that which is constructed as “Other” including, but not limited to, Muslims and Islam. I also look at the historical roots of this antagonism which has become part of the dominant discourses in the North and the West. Exposing this hostility is important as it provides the justification for imperial powers to invade parts of the world where the majority of the population is Muslim. It is easier for the current superpower and its supporters (including preceding powers) to further their capitalist imperialist aims through the use of violence and by manufacturing the consent of their public when those who are at the receiving end are not seen as full human beings.

2) **The roots of misconceptions and stereotypes of the ‘Other’**

I should indicate first that the discourses I am referring to construct “images, beliefs, and evaluation,” for instance, of Palestinians, Iraqis, Muslims or Islam (this definition is adopted from Robert Miles, 1989). In addition to symbolic representations and significations, my definition also includes the broader process of communication (see Karim 2000). The focus in this section is mainly on Muslims and Islam. According to the work of Miles (1989), the roots of misconceptions and stereotypes of Muslims and their religion go back to the era preceding the 15th century, whereas, for the African, Latin American, and the rest of Asian people, it emerged in the post-15th century. Throughout history, contact and interaction were present and were facilitated through migration, trade, and warfare. The contact and interaction gave rise to the construction of images, beliefs, and representations of the so-called Other. These representations were neither universal nor uniform and often contradictory. Some have changed and some have remained the same depending on

the types of resistance and the social context. Despite the existence of variations, representations of the Other stemmed from people being seen as inferior to the Europeans. The dichotomous perceptions of the European and the Other based on superiority/ inferiority and inclusion/exclusion veered towards the extreme with the European contact with the African people. This was due to constructions pertaining to the colour of their skin and nakedness, as well as that they were viewed as heathens, uncivilized, lazy, superstitious, and cowardly. The perceptions and representations of Muslims, their Prophet Mohammed, and the religion of Islam were also extremely negative. Muslims were seen as barbaric and heathen, and Islam was seen as a false religion that spread through violence. The most negative perceptions emerged in the 11th century when the Muslims controlled the holy land (Jerusalem), and continued up until the 12th century when the Muslims were recognized as an international force. Europe felt threatened by this Islamic hegemony. The control of the holy land by 'infidels' resulted in an invasion of the land by the Crusaders. Europe viewed the Arabs' defence of their land and their resistance to being invaded as acts of violence and brutality, but did not see its invasion of Jerusalem in the same light. European colonization compounded with the decline of Islamic hegemony removed the supposed threat of Muslim dominance. There are important points to consider when referring to the social context in which the representations of the Other took place: 1) the intention and goals of contact; 2) the mode of production existing in Europe and abroad; 3) the differences in religion, culture, and climate. Those constituting the Other differed depending on the time period. Prior to the 15th century, Muslim Arabs were the Other, while later the Other included peoples in the rest of Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Miles, 1989).

3) Current misconceptions and stereotyping of Muslim people: the supposed Islamic threat was renewed with the Islamic resurgence of the 1980s and after the end of the Cold War with the collapse of the Soviet Union (for the narrow and stereotypical view of Islam by contemporary western intellectuals see for example the writing of Samuel P. Huntington, 1993; Bernard Lewis, 1990). After examining the work of F. Fukuyama and others, Ahmet Davutoglu (1994) tells us that: “In many hypothetical maps published in journals related to the political structure in coming century, it has been underlined [by these writers] that the only threat against the global values of western civilization and a unified Europe will come from Islamic fundamentalism” (p. 102, see also Karim, 2000). This perception of an Islamic threat was echoed by politicians and policy makers in the US. F. Halliday reveals that “In 1990 Vice-President Dan Quayle, in an address to the cadets at the Annapolis naval academy, linked Islamic fundamentalism to Nazism and communism. The right-wing Republican candidate in the 1992 presidential campaign, Pat Buchanan, declared: ‘for a millennium, the struggle for mankind’s destiny was between Christianity and Islam; in the twenty-first century it may be so again.’” (1996. p.183, cited in Karim 2000. p. 3).

Karim (2000) examines the coverage of what he refers to as the transnational mass media and the significant role they play in the discursive construction of an Islamic peril. Although, the media institutions are, as Karim explains:

based in North America and Europe, their political cultural reference points about international relations tend mainly to be anchored in the North. This tendency was well-illustrated during the Cold War in the almost mandatory journalistic framing of Southern states as either pro-West or pro-soviet: the significance of events in these countries were then judged according to their geopolitical placement in relation to the North. (p. 4)

He continues that, currently the mainstream media tend to draw attention “to real or alleged links of Muslims suspected of terrorism to Iran, Saddam Hussien, or Osama bin Laden. Violence committed by militant Muslims is usually placed within journalistic frameworks whose cultural roots are hundreds of years old.” Karim also examines editorial cartoons and shows how the mainstream media include “images such as the bloodthirsty Saracen wielding the sword of Islam [which is] rooted in the medieval European literature.” Karim emphasizes that such portrayals tend to impede the understanding of violence and of Islam.

4) Analysis of the dominant discourses in the mainstream mass media of North America.

Firstly, it should be indicated that the mainstream mass media are largely owned by the socio-economic elite (J. Winter, 1998) or the state. Secondly, they do not necessarily follow a deliberate plan to portray certain issues in specific ways, but these emerge from “a ‘naturalized’ hegemonic process through which they adhere to a common field of meanings” (Karim 2000, p. 5; see also Stuart Hall 1979).

The preferred coding of events and issues by the mass media, therefore, do not follow a centrally fabricated or specifically focussed procedure but one that functions within a hegemonic process of meaning creation (Karim, 2000, p. 6).

This context of meaning creation becomes naturalized and part of common sense perspectives and conventional wisdom. When perspectives become so naturalized and universalized, anything else becomes unthinkable, unimaginable (Winter, p. 140, see also the work of Noam Chomsky and Herman 1988).

Moreover, the consensus by the media on the major issues of the day become mirrored by dominant discourses (Karim 2000, p. 5) and “provide the definitions,

theoretical paradigms, agenda, and frames with reference to which a society gives meaning to subjects of importance.” These reference points, he continues, “form the bases for public discussions and integration propaganda about topics such as democracy, science, culture, violence, and peace. Specific (conscious and unconscious) uses of language, visual imagery, and presentation formats by hegemonic discourses tend to reinforce the *status quo*.”

The US government, for instance, keeps an international list of “terrorist states” that they see as threatening the vital economic interest of the US and its corporate elite. These states include Iraq, Libya, Iran, south Yemen, Sudan, and Syria. “The mass media in the US generally adhere to such discourses of Washington’s foreign policies,” explains Karim, “[and] these tendencies have global implication due to the world-wide dissemination of the American media content”(2000. p. 13). The dominant frames of “terrorism” and “Islam” are used to discredit world leaders when they become defined as enemies of the US. Saddam Hussein is a good example (see for further examples, Karim, 2000; and Chomsky, 1987). Thirdly, the relationships of power that are manifested in these discourses in which the media both draw on and reinforce are complex. In addition to their links to economic and political elements (according to various Marxist and political economy theorizing), the discourses also include knowledge of select experts and professionals (in the Foucaultian sense) who often give further legitimacy to and reinforce the naturalized dominant discourses (for a good discussion on the complexity of the links between power and knowledge according to a Foucaultian analysis, see the work of J. Ryan, 1999, chapter 3; and B. Schissel, 1997, chapter 6). Fourthly, alternative discourses appear from time

to time, but they are ineffective because they are only referred to in a superficial way. Looking at this in the context of news media, James Winter's extensive analysis shows that, in addition to the fact that the influence in our society by the news media is tremendous (1998. p. 139), "The reluctant news product is not monolithic in nature, but it is overwhelmingly narrow in terms of its range and focus. Alternative perspectives are like so many life rafts on an ocean of news" (p. 140). In other words, these alternative perspectives are simply small, fragmented bits floating in a sea of (mis)information.

In addition, I argue, because one important aim of the mass media is to realize profit, to achieve their financial goals they dwell on the socially constructed images, myths, and stereotypes of certain ethnic/racial or religious groups which are part of the dominant discourses because these are the ones that sell (see for further explanation, Henry, Frances Henry, Tator, Mattis, and Rees, 2000, chapter 10). Put a bit differently: "The mass media are indeed a 'marketplace of ideas,' but the information that supports the dominant ideas in society are usually placed in the most prominent showcases of the journalistic bazaars" (Karim, 2000, p. 6). The image of Islam and Muslims in the mainstream media of the North, then, is frequently constructed in a monolithic, one-sided way and one that constitutes a dangerous threat to Western civilization and liberal values (for a critical analysis of this coverage see Karim, 2000; Said 1997). This view of Muslims and Islam, according to Karim's critique of the Northern mainstream media

is linked variously to communism, fascism, Nazism.... 'the Islamic peril' has become a convenient common enemy of the West and Eastern Europe since it can be presented as a fundamental threat to civilization.... The image of religion, when required, is used effectively to demonize certain enemies: the use of terms such as "Islamic," "Shia," and "jihad" frequently serve in dominant Northern discourses to discredit Muslim

groups (p.12).

In his examination of Western mass media, Edward Said (1981, 1997) demonstrates that the above view of Muslims is more a manifestation of power relations than a genuine attempt to understand Islam and its followers (also on the links of power relations to the political and economic elements in the context of explaining international violence, see Najib Ghadbian, 2002).

Such a view of Muslims, coupled with the capitalist/imperialist motives of the US, its immense military industry and powerful army lead to the justification of violence against them.

Why this war on Iraq? US foreign policy and the issue of peace and justice in the Middle East

I focus on aspects relating to understanding the US system and what it stands for and show that there is a double standard and hypocrisy, especially regarding the issues of international peace and justice. In the following sections I show the existence of the hypocrisy and the double standard, and how the US, on the whole, hinders international peace and justice in the region instead of promoting them. I start first with the invasion of Iraq and subsequently refer to relevant examples regarding the nature of links between the US and Israel and the Palestinians.

The invasion of Iraq

According to international principles of justice, one would conclude that the invasion of Iraq was not justified, and was definitely immoral, illegal, inhumane and undemocratic. How can the killing of innocent Iraqi civilians who are on the edge of survival, and the further destruction of their infrastructure—including drinking water and

electricity as had been predicted by the UN and other sources—be justified? The following quote is worth citing at length because it enables us to grasp the devastation of wars and the catastrophic impacts of economic sanctions, which are equivalent to weapons of mass destruction. It is taken from the Iraq Action Coalition, an online media and activists' resource center for people who were working to stop the sanctions and the war against the people of Iraq. According to the Coalition (Nov. 18, 2001):

The amount of explosives dropped on Iraq in the first day alone (January 17, 1991) of air and naval attacks was equivalent to the explosive power of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. This military onslaught on a defenceless people included the first-time use of 300 tons of depleted uranium shells plus a frightening array of other internationally banned radiological, biological, and chemical weapons. All in all, over 140,000 tons of explosives, equivalent to 7 nuclear bombs, were used against the Iraqi society in destroying their environment and infrastructure.

Unfortunately, the war against the Iraqi people did not end with the cessation of military attacks in 1991, but continued with a suffocating blockade that claimed over one million civilian lives, the vast majority of whom are children and the elderly. More than 500,000 toddlers and infants have died due to the consequences of the sanctions (UNICEF, 1999). Twenty-three percent of all children in Iraq have stunted growth, approximately twice the percentage before the first Gulf war. Alarming food shortages are causing irreparable damage to an entire generation of children.

Certainly, the Iraqi people did not need to go through such a devastating, inhumane experience and they certainly did not need any more suffering or be invaded once again. While we do not know yet the exact amount of bombs, shells missiles, depleted uranium and other harmful weapons that were used in this current invasion, ironically called “Operation Freedom,” but from the few ‘non-embedded’ reports coming out by Robert Fisk, Mark Steel (see the Independent online), Peter Pilger (Znet) and others, we do have a good idea that it was brutal and barbaric. Its negative impact, both on Iraqi civilians and the infrastructure, was immense. The US-led invasion of Iraq violated international

law, the international community and UN standards and principles that assert that peoples and nations have the right to determine their own destiny free from military coercion by great powers. This "sovereignty rationale" is based on international law and the UN. Article 2.1 of the UN Charter makes clear that "The organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members." The imperial powers and their supporters blatantly disregard the UN Charter and international law and invade and intervene in the affairs of weaker nations. At the same time, they speak of rights and freedom, which is hypocritical. Along this line of hypocrisy, defenders of the U.S. attack on Iraq or Afghanistan do not express any great concerns for Afghani or Iraqi civilian victims of the U.S. war military machine; indeed, the US government has expressed no interest in tabulating Iraqi casualties.

Regarding the negative impact of the invasion on international law, Chomsky warned that: "The planned invasion will strike another blow at the structure of international law and treaties that has been laboriously constructed over the years..." (Aug. 29, 2002). There has not been any solid evidence that Iraq constituted any threat to its neighbours, to the US, or to the economic interest of the latter. Nor has there been any evidence to show that Iraq has any links to the Al-qaaida network. There have been, however, many false allegations by the US administration. There is the potential that Iraq might represent a threat to America's most favoured ally in the region, that is, Israel. Or as Anthony Sampson, writing for the Guardian online, puts it:

No logic has yet been presented that an attack on Iraq is necessary for western interests or western security. There is no sign that international terrorism is at all influenced by Saddam Hussein or connected either financially or in terms of human beings. The reasons why the United States feels impelled to invade Iraq have got very little to do with American citizens and has a great deal more to do with the interests of Israel, which...[feels]... threatened by Iraq, and which has much more reason to want an attack on Iraq. (Tues. Feb. 4, 2003)

The reference to Israel is a point that I will get back to later. The Anglo-American forces invaded Iraq, and are currently an occupying force, and have yet to find any weapons of mass destruction. Addressing this issue, Hans Blix, the chief UN weapons inspector, reasserted on April 22nd that: "I think it's been one of the disturbing elements.... that London and Washington had built the case for invading Iraq on ;very, very shaky' evidence" (cited in Usborne, 23 April 2003). Mr Blix, who is troubled that the US is attempting to assemble its own inspection teams, points out that: "We may not be the only ones in the world who have credibility, but I do think we have credibility for being objective and independent."

Many professors of international law and academics from Oxford, Cambridge, London School of Economics, SOAS, UCL and the University of Paris wrote to Downing Street and high profile western newspapers emphasizing that "there was no justification for war whatsoever, under international law" (Jamal Harwood, 2003). In their letter they further explain: "the UN charter outlaws the use of force with only two exceptions: either individual or collective self-defence in response to an armed attack, and action authorised by the security council as a collective response to a threat to the peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression." They conclude by stipulating that: "There are currently no grounds for a claim to use such force in self-defence. The doctrine of pre-emptive self-defence against an attack that might arise at some hypothetical future time has no basis in international law. Neither security council resolution 1441 nor any prior resolution authorises the proposed use of force in the present circumstances" (cited in Jamal Harwood, 2003). However, representatives of the US decided to proceed with their barbarous act despite that they knew ahead of time that their invasion of Iraq will

definitely increase the likelihood of terror as intelligence and UN aid agencies have been predicting and warning. Indeed, perhaps Iraq was more of a threat to its neighbours when it had good relations with the US, that is, when it was an ally of the US and they were supporting Saddam in its war with Iran—a War that lasted almost a decade.

Chomsky, in a recent interview with Michael Albert (see Znet, Aug. 29, 02—M. Albert), elaborates on Saddam and his weapons of mass destruction, which supports the analysis regarding market forces and the enhancement of the hegemony of super powers. He tells us: “That he's a major criminal is not in doubt. That's not changed by the fact that the US and Britain regarded his major atrocities as insignificant in the light of higher ‘reasons of state,’ before the Gulf war and even after -- facts best forgotten.” Chomsky concludes:

“... that Saddam is probably less of a danger now than before 9-11, and far less of a threat than when he was enjoying substantial support from the US-UK (and many others),” which means that there is no justification for the war on Iraq. Chomsky’s prediction was true as the world saw how defenseless Iraq was in this second invasion. “Operation Freedom” was an easy “victory” for the US.

On the double standards that exist internationally that I referred to earlier, Chomsky tells us that the weapons inspections were vastly more effective than bombing and destroying Iraq's military capacities, and appear to have been largely successful. Going a step beyond, when was the last time there was a meaningful (or any) international inspection of Israel's nuclear and (probably) chemical weapons facilities? Or those of the US?

Inspection of regimes should be established, and universalized, but that again requires US acquiescence. How long do people have to suffer due to the policy of market forces—that is, Western foreign policy that serves the interests of the dominant corporate elite?

It is hypocritical that representatives of the US, who want to protect the world from

weapons of mass destruction, hold in their nation more weapons of mass destruction than any other nation in the world. Perhaps, the response to the following questions by Eduardo Galeano in a recent issue of Znet (Jan. 14, 03 in an article titled The USA is at War) will shed some light on this hypocrisy. He asks questions that reflect the role that the US has been playing internationally. I have selected two that he raises satirically:

1) Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the scariest of them all?

2) Was it Iraq that killed the elderly, women and children in Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

The answers, of course, point towards the US—the supposed bringer of democracy.

Referring to the power of market forces and their impact, Galeano explains that, “Every time the Market says go, the dangerometer jumps into the red zone and all suspicions become reality. Wars kill in the name of prevention and doubt, proof not needed. This time it's Iraq's turn, condemned once again. It's a simple equation: Iraq contains the second largest reserve of [oil] in the world, just what the Market needs for the fuel needs of a spendthrift consumer society.” Galeano also exposes US complicity in Hussein’s use of biological weapons: “Mere decades ago, the United States allowed Saddam Hussein to launch biological weapons against the Kurds. At the time Saddam Hussein was the pet of the Western world and the Kurds weren't liked. These weapons were produced...[and] purchased from a company in Rockville, Maryland, U.S.A.” As his example makes clear, in the search for new markets, capitalism turns a blind eye to atrocities.

Understanding US foreign policy

To understand why the US invaded Iraq again, we need to look at some basic aspects of the American regime and the American system, which, by and large,

characterizes US foreign policy, and shows what the US stands for. While there is no denying the fact that the concerns for issues pertaining to democracy, human rights, freedom and equity are present in American society, especially at the level of policy making, they are not necessarily always present at the level of application. The latter is especially true in the last decade or so in which there has been an erosion of these fundamental principles. The rise in poverty and the disproportionate overrepresentations of African Americans (and Hispanics) in the American criminal justice system are two examples that illustrate the deterioration of the aforementioned principles (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 1996. pp. 451-452). More recently, and in part due to 9/11, the US, as well as Canada, are moving backwards at the level of policy making, in that they are adopting, implementing, and pursuing policies that are based on race, e.g., the anti-terrorism policy with its racial profiling focus. It should be indicated however that the principles of democracy, human rights, freedom and equitable relations, to whatever extent they exist, do not exist on their own, but rather, co-exist with the forces of capitalism. The role of the US internationally should not only be seen in this contradictory context, but also in the context of imperialistic aims--something that the US has inherited from preceding colonial powers, most notably France and Britain, and which are not necessarily outside capitalist interest and ideals. bell hooks points out the many problems inherent to the US system. In *Teaching to Transgress* (1994, pp. 27-28), she tells us that many people in the US today are living in a state of floundering and confusion due to a commitment of many American leaders to “maintaining systems of domination—racism, sexism, class exploitation, and imperialism. They promote a perverse sense of freedom that makes it synonymous with materialism. They teach us to believe that domination is ‘natural,’ that it is a right for the strong to rule over the weak, the powerful over the powerless.” She is

amazed that people claim that these values are not adopted by them. They dispute that by saying that if our collective rejection of these values is complete they would not exist in our lives.

The mainstream media in the US and the manufacturing of consent

My focus in this section is on the power and impact of the dominant discourses and mainstream media in the US in dwelling on, reflecting and legitimising further certain views of our social world. We currently are witnessing the emergence of a strong resistance movement throughout the world, including from within the US, which mobilized against the invasion of Iraq due, in part, to alternative media which are readily available on the net. Despite this resistance, however, the neo-conservative ideologies and policies pursued under globalization emerging from the so-called liberal democratic societies headed by the US and Britain are moving more in the direction of appeasing the forces of capital. Profitability, greed, money, exploitation, and control come before humanitarian or democratic concerns—particularly when those democratic concerns lie outside of Western nations. These forces are becoming more dominant internationally under the current era of globalization. Despite the strong resistance to US foreign policy inside and outside American society, the American New Right with the help of their corporate media are still able to effectively brainwash a large segment of the population. For instance, *Nation* journalist William Greider indicates that: “according to a *New York Times*/CBS News survey, 42 percent of Americans believe that Saddam Hussein was directly responsible for the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. And 55 percent believe that Saddam directly supports al-Qaeda, according to an ABC News poll,” (cited in Arno, March 19, 2003). As Chomsky explains in a

recent interview with V.K. Ramachandran (Znet, April 02, 2003), in the last few months there has been an impressive accomplishment of government-media propaganda, very noticeable in the polls. The international polls indicate that “support for the war is higher in the United States than in other countries.” He expands: “Since September 2002, the United States is [also] the only country in the world where 60 per cent of the population believes that Iraq is an imminent threat - something that people do not believe even in Kuwait or Iran.” Explaining the high percentage of Americans who believe that Saddam Hussein was directly responsible for the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, Chomsky points to the role of the media:

This has happened since September 2002. In fact, after the September 11 attack, the figure was about 3 per cent... Government-media propaganda has managed to raise that to about 50 per cent. The fact that government-media propaganda was able to convince the people that Iraq is an imminent threat and that Iraq was responsible for September 11 is a spectacular achievement and... was accomplished in about four months.

Chomsky acknowledges that while “there was never a statement that Iraq is going to invade the United States or that it carried out the World Trade Centre attack” he explains that these were indirectly yet relentlessly brought before the eye of the public: “It was just insinuated, hint after hint, until they finally got people to believe it” (Chomsky, Znet, April 02, 2003). In the same article, Chomsky notes that the US would have done terribly in the election if social and economic issues had been the main focus, but the people’s attention was diverted to security issues.

My next point illustrates the link between the bias of the media and the construction of patriotism. As a preface to this point, the context that I referred to earlier regarding dominant discourses is key. And that is, we should not overlook the strong,

albeit, complex relationships, that exist between corporate, political, and media elite under capitalism, as well as the orchestration of events (not necessarily intentional) in regards to the binary split of 'us' and 'them' which is part of dominant discourses and gets reinforced by the political elite. From within an 'us' and 'them' framework, the mainstream media becomes preoccupied with patriotic focuses rather than delving into the complexities of international relations and possible problems emerging from US foreign policy. Also, within the discourse of patriotism, even the most popular and impartiality-seeking members of the corporate media feel that they have to follow a form of self-censorship. After closely examining American corporate media news networks, Anthony Arnove shows how they become a branch of the war effort. He cites many examples that expose the link between media propaganda and patriotic discourses. For example, CBS news anchor Dan Rather, who is a well-respected US media figure because of his liberal stance, admitted in May 2002,

What we are talking about here--whether one wants to recognize it or not, or call it by its proper name or not--is a form of self-censorship. It starts with a feeling of patriotism within oneself. It carries through with a certain knowledge that the country as a whole...felt and continues to feel this surge of patriotism within themselves. And one finds oneself saying: 'I know the right question, but you know what? This is not exactly the right time to ask it (cited in Arnove, March 19, 2003 On-line).

Arnove indicates that Rather made this statement to Britain's BBC--but didn't have the courage to say it in the US media, "where he had been leading the patriotic charge in the media after the attacks of September 11. Predictably, almost no outlet of the U.S. mainstream media reported on Rather's comments." Arnove brings to light media self-censorship in regards to raising problematic or difficult questions that go against the grain: "No one in Washington had to tell newspapers to bury them--just like no one had

to tell the press to ignore reports, published in Britain's *Observer* newspaper, that the Bush administration spied on United Nations (UN) Security Council members during the debate on a new resolution to authorize war on Iraq" (March 19, 2003 On-line). Arnove also quotes Rather's blatant lining up on the 'us' side of patriotism: "I would willingly die for my country at a moment's notice and on the command of my president."

I would also like to note another example from Arnove's article (March 19, 2003 On-line) involving Tom Wicker, a veteran journalist who speaks of the kowtowing of the American press to the Bush administration: "Bush administration spokesmen have made several cases for waging war against Iraq, and the U.S. press has tended to present all those cases to the public as if they were gospel." We are witnessing, Wicker explains, "an American press that seems sometimes to be playing on the administration team rather than pursuing the necessary search for truth, wherever it may lead." While the aforementioned analysis in the beginning of my paper does not necessarily suggest that the media intentionally and consciously distort the truth, these last examples by Arnove and Wicker give the impression that there was an intentional effort on the part of journalists and general editors (on the latter, for a good analysis, see Winter, 1998) to emphasize certain aspects over others. From this brief discussion, it should be indicated that not only does one have to put up with atrocities, injustices, and violence being committed by representatives of the superpower and their supporters, but also one has to put up with discourses that justify hypocrisies and double standards. More importantly, when these discourses become entrenched and part of the dominant perspective and boundaries are drawn, it becomes very difficult to approach certain issues from a different angle, because the parameters of debate have been drawn. Palestinians, Iraqis

and Muslims are put in a situation in which their histories are excluded even before they step into the discussion, and it becomes imperative to tell their stories all over again from the beginnings. One must also be careful not to offend people who are repeating and reinforcing the dominant perspective in their daily conversation and communication. One cannot even raise certain questions, for instance, ask why there is (state) terrorism in the world and what are the causes of it. Moreover, the presence and social construction of capitalist relations, binary splits based on race, class, or gender, and the association of capitalism with democracy stand in the way of addressing questions of inequity, injustices, and oppression.

In order for change to come about, people have to know what is going on, particularly from the perspective of those who have been wronged, oppressed, excluded and/or misrepresented. Perhaps fundamental change will occur when the dominant mainstream media, instead of reflecting historically-laden discourses that reinforce the status quo start to address equitably the problems that exist in society and their gendered, racialized, and classist roots. I will refer to some examples: How often do we hear references to the Palestinian people as victims of Israeli brutality, as oppressed peoples defending themselves, resisting occupation, and struggling to restore their homeland? How often do we hear of 'suicide bombers' committing acts of 'terrorism' rather than 'freedom fighters' who are using desperate means because the world has turned a deaf ear to their just cause for Palestinian self-determination? How often do the dominant discourses include 'why' questions rather than just simply describing what is going on? Or bring up questions of what to do about it and how, but, raise them and respond to them from an ethnocentric perspective? How often are the complex political and historical relations underlying the violence brought to light? Or the question of why the

Palestinians are picking up stones and strapping on bombs? How often do we hear that Israel is and has been a colonial power oppressing Palestinians, occupying Palestinian lands? How often do we hear that Israel has been brutalizing the Palestinians, subjecting them to humiliation, violence, torture, and undignified deaths? Are we made aware that the US is the only country out of the five permanent members in the Security Council that vetoes every resolution concerning the condemnation of Israel for its mistreatment of the Palestinians?

Changes in US foreign policy and international peace, violence and justice

Since the 1950s, the foreign policy of the US, more or less, has been reflecting a neo-colonial approach when dealing with and treating people from the so-called developing nations. Concerns for human rights or other important fundamental principles are less likely to be manifested by US state representatives unless the violators of human rights are the so-called enemies of America. We only need to remind ourselves about a few examples regarding American political interference and its disastrous consequences-- imperialistic and racist forays in countries such as Chile, Nicaragua, Grenada, East Timor, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Iraq, and Palestine. US political interference is racist in the sense that it is characterized by a binary split on the basis of superiority/inferiority, us and them, and the civilized and the uncivilized. More recently and especially after 9/11, representatives of US foreign policy are becoming more blatant and aggressive with their imperial approach, and are primed to use military force to maintain their control. To shed more light on the recent changes in American foreign policy, I would like to refer to Tariq Ali's explanations in his recent article "Re-colonizing Iraq" published in the New Left Review (May-June 2003). He explains that The Republican Administration has

made use of the national tragedy of 9.11 to follow a bold imperial agenda, of which the occupation of Iraq will be the first manifestation of such a strategy. The programme it aims to apply was first revealed in 1997 under the title of, '*Project for the New American Century*'. Those who endorsed it include Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Jeb Bush, Zalmay Khalilzad, Elliott Abrams and Dan Quayle, as well as intellectuals that work closely with the US administration such as Francis Fukuyama, Midge Decter, Lewis Libby and Norman Podhoretz. They argued: 'We seem to have forgotten the essential elements of the Reagan Administration's success: a military that is strong and ready to meet both present and future challenges; a foreign policy that boldly and purposefully promotes American principles abroad; and national leadership that accepts the United States' global responsibilities' (cited in Ali, May-June 2003 On-line). Ali's analysis also indicates that: "The language of this coterie, compared with the euphemisms of the Clinton era, is commendably direct: *to preserve US hegemony*, force will be used wherever and whenever necessary. European hand-wringing leaves it unmoved." This blatant use of force in order to achieve its goals represents the most important shift in US foreign policy. In explaining further the meaning of this new policy that the US is following to maintain its domination by force, I will draw now on the work of Chomsky and then return to Ali's analysis. Chomsky (interviewed by V.K. Ramachandran Znet, April 02, 2003) views what is currently happening in Iraq as a trial run which means it is to try and establish what the U.S. calls a "new norm" in international relations. The new norm is "preventive war." He emphasizes that new norms are created only by the United States. He also differentiates that from pre-emptive war which means it is a response to ongoing or imminent attack "Pre-emptive war means that, for example, if planes were to fly across the Atlantic to bomb the United States, the

United States is permitted to shoot them down even before they bomb and may be permitted to attack the air bases from which they came.”

The doctrine of preventive war, he continues, “is totally different; it holds that the United States - alone, since nobody else has this right - has the right to attack any country that it claims to be a potential challenge to it. So if the United States claims, on whatever grounds, that someone may sometime threatens it, then it can attack them.” The doctrine of preventive war was declared openly in the *National Security Strategy* last September. The Security Strategy states, in essence, “that the U.S. will rule the world by force. Furthermore, it will do so for the indefinite future, because if any potential challenge arises to U.S. domination, the U.S. will destroy it before it becomes a challenge.”

Chomsky then concludes: “It is important to establish such a norm if you expect to rule the world by force for the foreseeable future.” The arrogant, ethnocentric, and racist approach of US policy is very cleverly traced by Chomsky to the 1960s, to the Kennedy era, in which he tells us that in 1963, Dean Acheson, who was a senior Adviser of the Kennedy Administration and a well respected statesman, provided a justification of the attacks against Cuba in his talk to the American Society of International Law. Of course, for Chomsky, such an attack constituted large-scale international terrorism and economic warfare. Chomsky quotes some important phrases from Acheson’s speech in which the latter declares that “no ‘legal issue’ arises when the United States responds to a challenge to its ‘power, position, or prestige’ ... ” (cited in Chomsky, Znet, April 02, 2003).

Currently, this becomes the official government policy, according to Chomsky: “It now stands as official policy and this is the first illustration of it. It is intended to provide a precedent for the future.” Furthermore, he shed more light on this racism that becomes taken for granted by tracing its link to the history of imperialism. He points out: “Such

"norms" are established only when a Western power does something, not when others do. That is part of the deep racism of Western culture, going back through centuries of imperialism and so deep that it is unconscious.”

Ali provides us with a somewhat similar explanation to that of Chomsky. Ali says:

The 2001 assault on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon was thus a gift from heaven for the [US] Administration... A year later, the aims outlined in the ‘Project’ were smoothly transferred to the ‘National Security Strategy of the United States of America’, issued by Bush in September 2002. The expedition to Baghdad was planned as the first flexing of the new stance... There could be no better demonstration of the shift to a more offensive imperial strategy than to make an example of it now (New left Review, May-June 2003 On-line).

He further refers to the reasons and the effects of adopting a more offensive imperial policy:

Economically, Iraq possesses the second largest reserves of cheap oil in the world; Baghdad’s decision in 2000 to invoice its exports in euros rather than dollars risked imitation by Chávez in Venezuela and the Iranian mullahs. Privatization of the Iraqi wells under US control would help to weaken OPEC. Strategically, the existence of an independent Arab regime in Baghdad had always been an irritation to the Israeli military.... Lastly, just as the use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki had once been a pointed demonstration of American might to the Soviet Union, so today a blitzkrieg rolling swiftly across Iraq would serve to show the world at large, and perhaps states in the Far East—China, North Korea, even Japan—in particular, that if the chips are down, the United States has, in the last resort, the means to enforce its will” (May-June 2003).

As I previously indicated, the world wide resistance against the US aggression and imperialistic policy is becoming stronger, in which the American administration finds itself in a situation where they have to keep orchestrating lies in order to manufacture the consent, especially of the American public. When the representatives of the American regime could not produce a convincing argument about the false claim regarding Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction to use it as a pretext to invade, they started

to use a different line of argument. They started to make claims about bringing democracy to the region. They thought that they would be able to sway world opinion. In doing so, they have shown that they know little about how people think outside the US, whether in the Arab countries or the rest of the world, for that matter. Just because they are still able to deceive a great number of the American people by constantly telling them lies and hiding the reality and their imperialistic motives from them, that should not mean that they can fool the rest of the world. Watching Arabic satellite channels before and during this invasion, people in the Arab world, including politicians and journalists alike, constantly refer to the invasion as a brutal, immoral, and illegal act--an occupation and a re-colonization of Iraq. Or as one eloquent British Muslim writer--writing for the independent puts it (Khan, 02 April 2003):

With British and US credibility in tatters, no one in the Muslim world now believes that this is really all about "making the world a safer place", about al-Qa'ida and the War on Terror, about Saddam and his weapons of mass destruction, about the imminent threat to the "civilised world", or the violation of UN resolutions; far less about the emancipation of the Iraqi people. Instead, many are asking the question: Which country is really in need of regime change and, in the words of the great statesman Nelson Mandela, is "the greatest threat to world peace?"

I definitely agree with the above and with Ali that: "The peoples of the Arab world view Operation Iraqi Freedom as a grisly charade, a cover for an old-fashioned European-style colonial occupation, constructed like its predecessors on the most rickety of foundations—innumerable falsehoods, cupidity and imperial fantasies" (Tariq Ali May-June 2003).

US foreign policy and the Palestinian-Israeli question

The hypocrisy of the US foreign policy, the double standards, the disregard for basic human rights and justice, as well as the disregard for international laws, agreements

and conventions is evident, especially in its treatment of the Iraqis and the Palestinian peoples. This bias becomes clearer when one looks comparatively at how US representatives treat the Iraqi, and the Palestinian people, and the way they treat the Israelis. Acting in this way, the US, with its foreign policy constitutes a major obstacle to world peace. As illustrated above, with respect to Iraq, there has been a lot of international resistance to US foreign policy. There has also been a surprising awareness of the falsification and illegitimate claims that the US has been fabricating over the years about Iraq. Hence, part of the truth has been emerging, albeit in bits and pieces regarding how the US wants to rule the world by force, how it is bullying and threatening weaker and even European nations which refuse to join them in treating violence with more violence or initiating violence, when they feel that their vital economic interest is threatened, or when they are unable to maintain their hegemonic imperial interests. A lot of people also have been analytical enough about the reality of wars and have learned a lot from the previous Gulf War between the US, with its allied forces against Iraq, to know that it will involve not just two persons Bush and Saddam, or just soldiers, but that there is a great possibility that more innocent Iraqi lives will be lost. The Iraqis who were fortunate enough to stay alive are subjected, as we are currently witnessing, to face more hardships because the source of their subsistence, including, of course, food and sanitary water as well as other parts of their infrastructure, are further destroyed. This inhumane devastation is also something that was predicted by the anti-war movement, the UN, and many analysts. As if the Iraqi people have not suffered enough from previous wars and protracted economic sanctions that were initiated, I should add, by the representatives of the American administration who are, ironically, professing to bring peace, democracy and prosperity to the Iraqi peoples. If the US is genuinely interested in

international justice and peace, and doing something about nations which have weapons of mass destruction, they would focus on countries such as Israel, which possesses them. They can also stop providing Israel with economic and military aid in which the former use them to kill Palestinian people through state-sponsored terrorism that we do not hear much about on this side of the world, unless framed through a pro-Israeli regime lens. When we do hear about what Israel is doing to the Palestinian people, it is usually depicted as either retaliation or self-defence. If it wants to, the US can also persuade, push, or even force Israel to have peace with the Palestinians, as well as with its neighbours. If the US is interested in peace, it can also stop Israel from building more illegal settlements on Palestinian land, as well as to dismantle the existing illegal settlements. To shed more light on the aforementioned points, I will now summarize some of the most important concrete evidence that has been documented which shows the nature of this relationship between Israel and the US, as well as the negative impact of such relations on the Palestinians.

Israel receives a large amount of financial aid from the US--around one-third of total US aid to foreign nations. For instance, between 1949 and Nov. 2001, "the US has given Israel ...[more than \$84 billion]. In 1997 alone, the total of US grants and loan guarantees to Israel was \$5.5 billion." Through this financial aid, Israel is able to acquire tanks, helicopter gunship, F-16 warplanes, machine guns and bullets. All these weapons are used daily against the Palestinian people, thereby, constituting the most serious human rights violations. For instance: "Between 28 September 2000, and Nov. 2001, Israeli police, soldiers and settlers have killed more than 2,050 Palestinians" -- the overwhelming majority of them were civilians--resulting in gross violation of

international law. (on these points, see the Palestine Monitor--fact sheets, On-line, Nov. 2001). These gross violations of international law by Israel were addressed recently by *Richard Falk* (Winter 2000, On-line), who is an authority on the subject. He stipulates that: "For 33 years, Israel has administered a military occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem in consistent and relentless defiance of the overwhelming will of the organized international community." He adds: "The international consensus has been expressed through widely supported resolutions passed by the Security Council and the General Assembly of the United Nations." Without this military power, Israel would not have been able to maintain its occupation of the Palestinian territories for the past thirty-six years, or continue in expanding and building more settlements on Palestinian land. The US, therefore, by subsidizing and financing the Israeli government's occupation of the Palestinian territories, is not only helping Israel to continue committing these injustices against the Palestinian people, but also hindering the prospect of real peace in the region. Not only is the "excessive use of force" towards Palestinian civilians and its policy of "state-sponsored terrorism" a serious violation of international human rights law, but, it is also a violation of The US law. "... In supplying military aid to such a state, the US is [also] violating its own laws. Under the 1967 US Arms Export Control Act, it is illegal to use US weapons to carry out extra-judicial killings" (for the 1967 US Arms Export Control Act, see 22 USC 2304 (5), cited in Palestine Monitor--fact sheets, On-line, Nov. 2001).

In addition to its involvement in gross violations of international law, Israel has also been ignoring the worldwide condemnation of these violations, and has not been honoring the supposed "peace" agreement with the Palestinians (for a good critique of

the Oslo Agreement, see the work of Said, 1994). Israel has also been, as stated above, continuing to build illegal settlements on Palestinian land. The following provides a snap-shot of the total illegal settlers residing on occupied Palestinian and Syrian land:

- › 182,000 illegal settlers in the West Bank
 - › 20,000 illegal settlers in the occupied Golan Heights
 - › 7,000 illegal settlers in the Gaza Strip
 - › 176,000 illegal settlers in East Jerusalem (on the above, see the Palestine Monitor--- Fact Sheet, Nov. 2001, On-line).
- Addressing the illegality of these settlements in the context of peace, Falk (Winter 2000, On-line) points out that:

UN Resolutions 242 and 338 affirmed the legal obligation of Israel to withdraw from Palestinian territories obtained in the 1967 Six Day War. This must be the end point of any peace process that can bring lasting peace. Until such time as Israel respects this obligation, the relevant principles of international law are contained in the Fourth Geneva Convention concerning the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (August 12, 1949), in particular those provisions of the Convention that require an occupying power to protect the status quo, human rights and prospects for self-determination of the occupied people, and oblige all signatories to enforce the Convention in the face of "grave breaches.

Rather than respecting these internationally recognized principles and convention, as well as endeavoring to move in the direction of a lasting peace, Israel has been rejecting this framework of legal obligations starting from 1967. It has also shown this refusal during the current uprising (al-Aqsa Intifada), and in its aftermath. Falk concludes: "Its refusal has been pronounced, blatant and undisguised. Not only has Israel failed to withdraw from the Occupied Territories, during the occupation Israel has "created facts" -- heavily armed settlements, bypass roads and security zones in the midst of a future Palestinian state -- that seriously compromise basic Palestinian rights" (Winter 2000, On-line).

The support that the US provides to such a brutal and racist Israeli regime, which

is worse than the former apartheid system of South Africa, shows the lack of concerns for issues of peace & justice of these two nations. It also shows the hypocrisy and insincerity of the US towards democracy, self-rule, and autonomy, especially, when they involve people who do not have much power or are looked at as inferior, uncivilized, or who are not allies of the US administration. More importantly, when the oppression of the Palestinians and their legitimate issues are not part of the dominant discourses in the US and their corporate media, then, there is no need to address these issues.

Concluding Remarks

Should the United States be taken off the hook for sanctions of mass destruction that have been imposed on Iraq and the current invasion with its inhuman devastation? For how long is the world and more specifically, people in the developing countries have to put up with injustices caused by great powers like the US. For how long is the world going to tolerate and accept the hypocritical action of the US to push aside the basis of international law and leave it to their leaders such as George Bush and other supporters to solve problems by violence at their own discretion? For how long should the world tolerate leaders like George Bush and Tony Blair, with their arrogance, ethnocentrism, class elitism and masculinist, one dimensional market-oriented approach, whose aim is to manufacture the consent by telling the public lies in order to further their interests and the interests of the very few corporate elite that they eagerly represent, so they can invade weaker nations and resort to more violence? Why is it that almost all of us were appalled and outraged, by the atrocities and horrendous crimes committed on 9, 11, but, are not equally appalled and outraged at the near silence and lack of action by the international community towards the Palestinian and the Iraqi

peoples (or those who are in a similar situation)--who have suffered enough due to racist oppressive policies supported by the US, which show a double standard and a double sense of justice, one for the rich and one for the poor? When we are able to adequately respond to these questions, at the individual and the collective levels, and when are able to address the power relations and their historical links and intersection with class, gender, race and ethnicity, then we will be able to move in the direction of international peace and justice.

One important reason why these atrocities continue is because a few people “know” about them, and because they are socially constructed in such a way that they become justified. In the case of Iraq, for instance, the inhuman invasion is framed in the context of “operation freedom,”-- we can bring them democracy-- or they brought it on themselves, or their leaders are responsible... such as Saddam Hussein or Arafat are to blame for these killings. We had to resort to violence to liberate the Iraqi people.

This line of “reasoning”, as I show in my paper, becomes naturalized because it becomes part of the dominant discourses. I also argue that in order to understand this process of manufacturing the consent of the public and respond to questions regarding whose definitions and whose ideologies become dominant, it should be analyzed in the context of the complex relations of power and resistance, and the role of the corporate media. (see the work of Chomsky and Herman 1988). In this paper, I further demonstrate that the reason why these crimes against humanity--these barbarous acts against innocent civilians, whether we are talking about Iraqis, or Palestinians--continue because of the US imperialist/capitalist foreign policy, which is becoming more violent and aggressive in maintaining its international hegemony.

The only hope we have is to keep resisting and working together with peace activists, other concerned citizens, and members of NGOs, and human rights agencies here and abroad. Our voices have to get louder and our actions have to be more effective. We should have important messages for the representatives of the American administration, and their supporters both at national and global levels. Unlike their messages, however, ours should stem from wisdom and centres on peace, compassion, and loving-kindness towards others. We definitely need to become a bit more creative in finding a different alternative to the current imperialistic, market-oriented, violent approach to doing things that has been thriving on class exploitation, racism, and sexism. If only we had an alternative approach based on humanitarian ideals and equity regardless of race, gender, or class and a discourse that manifests that, then, we would not have to tell the global enforcers, and their supporters enough is enough because they will already know that and will be preaching and applying it in the context of love, kindness and equality not violence. We would not need to tell them about inner peace and the need to live in harmony with the universe, because they will be reflecting that in the way they act. We would not have to tell them about endeavoring to get rid of hatred and to transcend egoism, greed, and craving for power over others. We would not have to tell them to stop the hypocrisy and talk to them about real peace and unity. We would not need to talk to them about the fact that real peace involves the elimination of poverty, racism, sexism, class exploitation and violence, because they will already know that and would have been working hard on combating the above.

Furthermore, there will be no need to tell them that there is no peace without justice and respect for human rights and fair international law, because they will be

working hard on making the international community more fair and equitable and especially the UN Security Council representations. Perhaps, the official representatives of such an alternative perspective would be telling us that non-violent struggle, to achieve the above, must be nurtured by love, compassion and wisdom (on these themes, see Quinney and Wildeman, 1990; and the Qur'an). And perhaps the global enforcers and their supporters would have said to all people of the world that we definitely do not need, and did not need another AGGRESSION ON IRAQ or Afghanistan or the continuation of the abuse of the Palestinians and their lands or other people who are in a similar situation.

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