In a special issue of *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, specifically dedicated to the “drug wars” in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, a number of contributors assert that Mexico is embroiled in a violent conflict both amongst drug cartels and between cartels and state security agencies, and may ultimately turn into a failed state (Bunker 2010; Bunker and Sullivan 2010). American law enforcement expert Robert Bunker, for instance, suggests that

...gang, cartel, and mercenary groups can translate a higher percentage of their economies (group revenue) into “criminal-insurgent” activities based on diplomacy-corruption (*plata*) and military-like (*plomo*) capabilities than the nation-state “law enforcement” capabilities needed to counter them. (2010, 21)

Bunker further argues that this has led to a situation in which the Mexican state “is no longer able to govern entire sectors within its sovereign territory and, instead, these areas have been taken by a narco-insurgency and lost to the influence of criminal-based entities” (2010, 10). Moreover, he contends that what he views as Mexico’s “narco-insurgency” can quickly spread
and mutate into a threat of hemispheric proportions (2010, 9-10).

On September 8, 2010 U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton made similar claims about the situation in Mexico—much to the chagrin of Mexican officials:

This is a really tough challenge. And these drug cartels are now showing more and more indices of insurgency; all of a sudden, car bombs show up which weren’t there before. (Clinton 2010, n.p.)

Yet, this is merely the latest episode in a story that has been unfolding since the late 1960s. A few months after he took office in 1969, President Richard Nixon informed Congress about what he viewed as a new threat to the nation:

Within the last decade, the abuse of drugs has grown from essentially a local police problem into a serious national threat to the personal health and safety of millions of Americans. […] A national awareness of the gravity of the situation is needed: a new urgency and concerted national policy are needed at the federal level to begin to cope with this growing menace to the general welfare of the United States. (Nixon 1969, 57A)

Addressing the International Drug Enforcement Conference in Miami on April 27, 1989 President George H. W. Bush went a whole step further and equated the fight against drugs with a world war of epic proportions:

I’m here today to talk about war: first, to see cocaine trafficking for what it is – an attack aimed at enslaving and exploiting the weak; second, to confront what’s become a world war. […] And I’ve said it before: The war on drugs is no metaphor. We’ve been slower to recognize that it is also a world war, leaving no nation unscathed, one in which Hong Kong bankers and Bolivian growers and Middle Eastern couriers and west coast wholesalers all play insidious roles. And it is especially acute in this hemisphere, where an explosive cycle of drugs, dependency, and dollars has escalated clear out of control. (Bush 1989, n.p.)

From the late 1960s the war on drugs has served to justify both a massive police build-up and increasing federal involvement in the hitherto predominantly local and regional domain of law enforcement. Moreover, the war on drugs meshed nicely with wide-ranging government efforts to crack down on increasingly militant domestic dissent. Christian Parenti even goes as far as to argue that the war on drugs and the ensuing overhaul of policing was primarily geared toward the suppres-
sion of domestic Black and Latino militancy (Parenti 1999). In a similar vein, when the war on drugs was exported abroad in the 1980s, it served as a justification for a permanent “U.S. counter-intelligence and paramilitary presence’ (Bullington and Block 1990, 39; cf. Marshall 1987; Morales 1989). Although the war on drugs has recently been overshadowed by the war on terror, it has shaped U.S. domestic and foreign affairs for several decades and continues to do so. What is more the war on terror and the war on drugs have been increasingly folded into one another, driven by the putative threats of “narco-terrorism’ or “narco-insurgency’ (Bunker 2010; Bunker and Sullivan 2010; Kan 2009).

In this essay I will take a closer look at how the war on drugs has para-militarized space. I wish to briefly discuss three interrelated facets. Firstly, I will highlight how the war on drugs has been framed by the ambiguous logic of security, above all the blurring of the boundaries between policing and war-fighting. In fact, George H. W. Bush was right: the war on drugs was (and is) no metaphor. But it’s not a conventional war either. The war on drugs is best understood by looking at the military doctrines that came to shape it: low-intensity conflict (LIC) and counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine. Secondly, I will show how the war on drugs has subjected space to the logic of security. I will argue that this process has entailed the design and deployment of border regimes, not just in the sense of borders between sovereign states but also in terms of complex assemblages that allow for the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate flows of people and resources. I will argue that these security assemblages serve tactically to enact a strategic sovereign decision on the legitimacy or illegitimacy of people and goods. Thirdly, I will discuss the international dimension of the war on drugs, how it has been folded into counterinsurgency operations in Latin America, most notably through Plan Colombia, and how it is now folded into the war on terror.

**Security**

The traditional dividing line between crime and war has become increasingly fuzzy. This is encapsulated in the ambiguous logic of security. Above all, security blurs the distinction between policing and war-fighting and the concomitant bound-
aries between inside and outside. Eyal Weizman provides a concise summary of this ambiguity:

The logic of “security’ […] presupposes that the danger is already inside, presented by a population in which subversive elements exist. […] If defence engages directly with the concept of war, security engages with the temporarily ill-defined and spatially amorphous “conflict’ not only between societies, but within them as well. “Security’ conceives new spatial practices and arrangements. It erects barriers and channels and rechannels the flow of people and resources through space. According to the logic of security, only a constantly configured and reconfigured environment is a safe environment. (Weizman 2007, 106-107)

Security centres around the management of flows of people and resources by means of configuring and re-configuring space. These configurations of space are based on a form of risk management. Risk is viewed as something that affects certain populations more than others. Moreover, particular populations and spaces are identified, categorized, and ultimately targeted as both at-risk and risky. In the context of the war on drugs, certain populations are considered to be more at risk of becoming victims of drugs and drug-related crime and more risky in the sense of harbouring threats against others. For example, U.S. domestic counter-narcotics efforts hinge on identifying so-called crime hotspots where drugs are sold to end users and where drug-related crime rates are particularly high. These hotspots are more likely than not located in poor urban and mostly Black or Latino neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods are then subjected to high-intensity, or rather para-militarized, policing that, above all, seeks to contain the risks associated with drug-related activities, ensuring that they don’t spill over into white, middle-class neighbourhoods. At the same time, the increasing fortification of the U.S.-Mexico border is also aimed at containing risky populations and activities, ensuring that they don’t flow into the homeland.

The war on drugs has been “America’s longest running concept war’ (Bewley-Taylor 2005, 84). According to David R. Bewley-Taylor, “concept wars’ are wars waged against an abstract concept, such as drugs or terrorism, rather than against a concrete enemy. Concept wars tend to be open-ended. As Bewley-Taylor puts it, “the absence of an enemy that can offer unconditional surrender, has the potential to produce perpetual
conflict’ (2005, 104). Allen Feldman refers to these conflicts as “securocratic wars of public safety”:

These wars are not exclusively focused on territorial conquest, or on an easily locatable or identifiable enemy with its own respective goals of territorial appropriation. Rather, they are focused on countering imputed territorial contamination and transgression – “terror-ist’, demographic and biological infiltration. These campaigns are not structured by time-limited political goals but are temporally open-ended. (Feldman 2004, 331)

Due to their open-ended nature securocratic wars amount to a permanent state of exception that erodes the conceptual boundaries between war and peace, law and violence, war-fighting and policing. Securocratic warfare, the amorphous notion of security and the state of exception form a tightly concatenated ensemble of power that cuts across the traditional boundaries between the domestic and the foreign arena and, at same time, constantly (re-)produces distinctions between those who belong and those who have to be excluded or even eliminated.

Through the war on drugs both border control and the policing of what sociologist Loïc Wacquant calls hyperghettos have become saturated with military hardware, expertise and doctrine (2001). However, it wouldn’t be entirely accurate to speak of a militarization of policing. Since the war on drugs has eroded the very boundaries between policing and war-fighting, it has also led to what we may call the “policization’ of the military. To an ever larger extent, the U.S. military has been urged to take on constabulary and policing missions. In short, the U.S. armed forces have been enjoined to play a more and more prominent role in controlling civilian populations both domestically and abroad. I think we should rather speak of the paramilitarization of both domestic and foreign social control, because this process is not so much informed by the doctrines of conventional inter-state warfare, as by low-intensity conflict and counterinsurgency doctrines.

Allen Feldman suggests that domestic policing has morphed into “a variation of counterinsurgency as crime is increasingly administered and contoured as a mode of clandestine economic circulation’ (2004, 334). Policing is concerned with the preemptive identification, tracking and targeting of illegitimate

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1 We should, however, note that this trend is also the subject of much debate and controversy, especially amongst military top brass.
flows of people and goods that blend into the quotidian circulation of legitimate flows. In this respect, domestic policing faces the same challenges as counterinsurgency: while counterinsurgents have to identify insurgents who hide amongst civilian populations, police forces have to identify potential and actual criminals as well as contraband amongst the legitimate everyday activities of ordinary people.

Irregular warfare\(^2\) is indeed characterized by a fuzzy relation between foreign defence and domestic public safety, the “politicization” of the military and the militarization of the police, and an emphasis on so-called pacification or population control (Army 2007; Dunn 1996; Kienscherf 2010; Long 2006; Ucko 2009). The fact that these types of warfare are focussed on the control of civilians is of particular relevance here:

The larger objective of LIC [low-intensity conflict] doctrine is to effect social control over targeted civilian populations by drawing selectively from this vast continuum of tactics to address any threat to stability (from a broad range of security concerns) in a manner that theoretically is more judicious and appropriate than are heavy-handed, less discriminate, conventional military approaches (Dunn 1996, 148).

In his book on The New Counterinsurgency Era David Ucko maintains that counterinsurgency and stability operations share three significant features: (1) they occur in a context of hostile activity (also known as a nonpermissive operational environment); (2) the stabilization effort forms part of a wider state-building initiative; and (3) the stabilizing force is deployed in the midst of a civilian population (Ucko 2009, 9-11). To a certain extent, the deployment of military tactics, technologies and troops in the war on drugs exhibits all these features.

First of all, the Reagan, Bush, and Clinton administrations massively escalated the war on drugs, turning it from a rhetorical device aimed at marshalling both public opinion and resources into an actual low-intensity conflict that was (and still is) fought not only along the U.S.-Mexico border but also in the streets of America’s hyperghettos. Dunn, for instance, quotes a leading federal counter-narcotics official\(^3\), who at the beginning

\(^2\) In fact, many of the differences between counterinsurgency operations, low-intensity conflict, or stability operations are largely about shifting trends in military jargon.

\(^3\) The name of the official is Warren Reece, then coordinator of the Southwest Border High Intensity Drug-Trafficking Area Program and director of Operation Alliance. Operation Alliance was an extensive federal counter-narcotics effort involving a
of the nineties baldly stated, “We are engaged in something akin to a guerrilla war along the border against well-entrenched and well-organized trafficking groups’ (Dunn 1996, 3). Moreover, the 1980s saw a spate of raids and ghetto sweeps in which heavily armed paramilitary police arrested thousands of, mostly black, young men. For example, in April 1988 the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) launched Operation HAMMER, “arresting more black youth than at any other time since the Watts Rebellion of 1965” (Davis 1992, 267-8). In fact, in the late 1980s and early 1990s Los Angeles was gripped by a massive anti-gang frenzy, as gangs came to be seen as the chief distribution networks for crack cocaine:

In the official version, which Hollywood is incessantly reheating and further sensationalizing these gangs comprise veritable urban guerrilla armies organized for the sale of crack and outgunning the police with huge arsenals of UZI and Mac-10 automatics. Although gang cohorts are typically hardly more than high-school sophomores, local politicians frequently compare them to the “murderous militias of Beirut.” (Davis 1992, 268)

A local mayor even went as far as to refer to gang members as “the Viet Cong abroad in our society” (Davis 1992, 268). Ever since drugs were declared a threat to national security, drug trafficking has been habitually scripted as a hostile activity that mandates the deployment of a wide range of security assets. Swaths of the border region as well as certain inner-city neighbourhoods have thus regularly been designated as quasi-hostile environments

Secondly, considering the deployment of military tactics, technologies and personnel both along the border and in domestic hyperghettos as part of a wider attempt at state-building may, at first glance, seem like a bit of a stretch. However, we have to bear in mind that on a more general level border regimes have always played a major part in state-making. As Mexico’s own domestic war on drugs heated up and turned more and more violent, with 7,200 victims of drug-related violence in 2008 alone, a Pentagon report, published in November 2008, concluded that due to the “sustained assault and pressure

number of different law enforcement agencies supported by the military (Dunn 1996: 200n).

4 For instance, in 1990 a 150-mile area along the southwest border was declared a “High-Intensity-Drug-Trafficking Area” (alongside four other sites located in major cities) (Dunn 1996: 112).
by criminal gangs’ Mexico’s government, police and judicial structures might collapse turning Mexico into a failed state” (USJFC 2008, 40). While a number of senior intelligence officials disputed the report’s claims, the newly elected Obama administration responded to the study’s warnings that “an unstable Mexico could represent a homeland security problem of immense proportions to the United States” by drawing up a “multi-agency security plan for the border” (Hsu and Sheridan 2009). The particular configuration of the border regime is a chief factor in the (re-)production of national identity, to the extent that it produces the on-the-ground distinction between who (and what) is to be included and who (and what) is to be excluded from the imagined community of the nation(-state). From this point of view, fighting a war on drugs both along national borders and in domestic “hotspots” can indeed be seen as a stability operation that forms part of a wider exercise in state-making.5

Thirdly and most importantly, the para-militarization of counter-narcotics efforts occurs in the midst of a civilian population that is sought to be controlled and managed, in order to identify dangerous elements hiding amongst the quotidian circulation of legitimate flows.

**Space**

On the one hand, populations are controlled through intelligence-led tactics, such as raids, terry stops, search-and-seizure operations, saturation patrols, etc.—tactics that we see both in counterinsurgency operations and in the context of domestic policing. On the other hand, control over targeted populations is effected through configuring space in such a way that flows of people and resources can be managed more effectively. This can take the form of barriers, road blocks, motion sensors, CCTV cameras, or more subtle urban design features that signal

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5 We should also note that border interdiction is commonly seen as a staple of counterinsurgency and stability operations insofar as it seeks to deny insurgents vital supplies as well as cross-border sanctuary (Celeski 2006; Long 2006). As retired U.S. Army Colonel Joseph Celeski puts it, “Porous borders and spaces for sanctuary, which provide operating space, can prolong an insurgency if the counterinsurgent ignores them or handles them insufficiently” (Celeski 2006, 51). Celeski further describes border areas in which insurgents operate as “ungoverned spaces’ that have to be brought under government control (Celeski 2006).
to risky populations that they are not welcome in certain areas. Tactics, physical changes in the environment and forms of knowledge(-production) are assembled into complex security mechanisms. These mechanisms face the seemingly impossible task of facilitating the smooth movement of shoppers, travellers, and commodities while filtering out criminals, terrorists, “illegal aliens” and contraband.

The construal of speed and mobility as defining characteristics of late modernity has almost become a cliché of contemporary social theory. Indeed, in the over-hyped accounts of a borderless world brought about by technology, transportation and economic globalization, the border is a generally under-theorized and under-studied site of contemporary politics (Zureik and Salter 2005, 5). Yet Zureik and Salter suggest that “[i]nter-state borders—of various significance—are central to the global mobility regime, the international system in both political and economic spheres, and to national identity. Inter-state frontiers always reflect the over-determination of economic, military, and cultural boundaries” (2005, 3).

However, besides demarcating national territory, borders are complex assemblages of tactics, technologies, and forms of knowledge(-production) that serve as instruments for tracking, targeting and managing the flow of people, goods and information in space. Border assemblages ought to be understood as sorting mechanisms that (re-)produce a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate elements and inscribe it in space. Due to a massive rise in mobility, borders can no longer be thought of in terms of traditional points of entry that allow movement into and out of a clearly demarcated territory. As Mark Salter argues:

> From the macro-politics of inside / outside, we see the emergence of a micro-politics of surveillance nets and vulnerable nodes. Thus, we have seen a sea change in our notion of territoriality, wherein the anxiety which was previously centred on the border has been projected onto a set of internal security measures (such as airport security and mall surveillance). (2005, 41-2)

Indeed, hardening “targets’ such as shopping malls, train stations, airports and other (semi-)public spaces ought to be seen as a set of micro-level techniques geared toward (re-)producing the macro-level distinction between who belongs and who does not. In short, border regimes are micro-political assemblages
aimed at resolving the macro-political tension between geo-economic and geo-political imperatives; that is to say, border regimes are designed to produce and reinforce a sovereign distinction between flows whose movement needs to be facilitated and those that need to be interdicted (Lahav 2008; Lyon 2008; Salter 2005, 2008a, 2008b; Sparke 2006).

Border assemblages are concrete manifestations of the liberal governmental technology that Michel Foucault called “apparatuses of security.” Foucault saw freedom of movement as instrumental for the operation of security within liberal governmentality:

I think it is this freedom of circulation, in the broad sense of the term, it is in terms of this option of circulation, that we should understand the word freedom, and understand it as one of the facets, aspects, or dimensions of the deployment of apparatuses of security. (2007, 48-9)

But not everybody or everything has this “option of circulation”, or has it to the same extent. In fact, some people are taken out of circulation completely. Rates of incarceration in the U.S. are staggering. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, in 2008 the U.S. correctional population, that is to say, those in prison, jail, on parole or on probation totaled 7.3 million. About 36% of the prison and jail population was black, 34% was white and 20% Hispanic (Justice 2009, 2). Black males are still six and a half times more likely to end up in jail than white males. By and large, the constant rise in the number of Americans under some form of correctional supervision is a direct consequence of the war on drugs.

Moreover, according to Loïc Wacquant, the prison and the hyperghetto constitute two increasingly intertwined sites for the confinement of a highly racialized criminal underclass considered to pose a risk to white, middle-class society (2001). The hyperghetto and the prison are instruments for controlling risky populations. But they also constitute risky spaces that, due to the very fact that they warehouse risky populations, need to be constantly monitored, controlled, policed and targeted by a variety of different tactics and technologies, ranging from methods of environmental design to the use of paramilitary police units. In short, they are spaces of exception that are not governed according to liberal standards.
The distinction between *liberal* and *illiberal* flows is the defining characteristic of a fundamental, albeit often disavowed, sovereign decision inherent in liberal governmentality. In this context the term sovereign distinction refers to the persistence of a specific form of sovereign power within governmentality. In the literature on governmentality sovereignty is defined as the exercise of central authority through the institutions of law and the executive. Governmentality, on the other hand, consists of a variety of decentred strategies and tactics aimed at promoting socio-economic processes. (Butler 2004; Dean 1999, 2000, 2002; Gordon 1991; Hindess 2004). Liberal governmentality emerged from a critique of an excess of government said to stifle these vital processes. It seeks to delimit the legitimate scope of government through the promotion of individual liberty and autonomy more effectively to foster and manage the socio-economic processes of the population (Dean 1999, 2000; Hindess 2004). Yet not everybody is seen as capable of exercising his or her liberty and some are even considered threats to the very existence of the liberal order. Thus, sovereignty is redeployed within the field of governmentality and assumes the function of an executive decision as to who or what constitutes a threat to the free development of society’s vital processes (Agamben 1995, 2005). This is a decision on the exception(s), a decision as to who can be governed through the promotion of freedom and who needs to be governed in a more authoritarian fashion (Hindess 2004). In fact, liberal governmentality hinges on a distinction between those who can be governed liberally and those who must be governed through illiberal or coercive means (Corva 2008, 177; Hindess 2004, 28). Sovereignty persists and even multiplies within the field of liberal governmentality (cf. Agamben 1995; 2002; 2005). But it no longer occupies a clearly identifiable position at the centre of government (cf. Butler 2004, 50-100). Rather, sovereignty has become decentred; it now pervades the entire social field and manifests itself in all those multiform and variegated governmental mechanisms that are geared toward distinguishing between liberal and illiberal elements.

The two most fundamental illiberal regimes of liberal governmentality are “the application of the military apparatus (the strategy of warfare) and the application of the criminal justice
apparatus (the strategy of policing citizens)’ (Corva 2008, 177). And as liberal governmentality now increasingly centres on the identification and targeting of both domestic and foreign spaces and populations of exception, these two illiberal regimes have become more and more indistinguishable (Corva 2008):

From the favelas of Rio de Janeiro to the slums of Mexico City to the shantytowns of Port-au-Prince; from the Andean highlands to Central American milpas; from Bogota’s adolescent assassins to Los Angeles-El Salvador Mara Salvatrucha gangmembers; from New York’s “zero tolerance” policing to Guatemala’s “Mano extra-dura” policing, disposable spaces and subjects of neoliberal globalization have been increasingly targeted by militarized police departments, military forces, and paramilitary forces in the name of getting tough on crime – usually narcotics-related crime. This augmentation of the state’s capacity to govern has occurred in tandem with the rolling back of its capacity to govern global capital through neoliberalization (Corva 2008, 177).

In short, specific spaces and populations are discursively constructed as risks to the liberal order and hence as targets of illiberal modes of government. And the instruments designed to target these illiberal spaces and populations frequently take the form of para-militarized policing and/or border assemblages. As a consequence, the knowledge regimes that serve to identify and categorize illiberal subjects and the actual practices of targeting these illiberal subjects must be seen as integral parts of liberal governmentality – both domestically and internationally.

**CROSSING DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN SPACES**

Plan Colombia, which was launched by the Clinton administration in 1999, was a clear step toward a further escalation of the war on drugs. Plan Colombia folded counter-narcotics operations into counterinsurgency and vice versa. In response to the killing of U.S. activists by FARC guerrillas, a general increase in guerrilla attacks and kidnappings in the wake of stalled peace talks between the FARC and the Colombian government, and the recognition that the seemingly successful kingpin strategy had failed to stem the flow of drugs into the U.S., the Clinton administration decided to frame Colombian instability as a threat to national security (Crandall 2002: 162). Plan Colombia

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6 The so-called kingpin strategy was launched in 1992 to specifically target the heads of major, mainly Colombian, drugs cartels.
was above all about increasing both military assistance and humanitarian aid to the Colombian government. Thus, in many respects this policy was a counterinsurgency-style combination of security and development. But it was presented to Congress as a new chapter in the war on drugs because the White House was aware that if scripted as part of the war on drugs, few members of Congress would oppose Plan Colombia. The Clinton administration thus went to great lengths to stress that Plan Colombia was a counter-narcotics rather than a counterinsurgency initiative (Crandall 2002, 163).

Plan Colombia has now entered its twelfth year. In October 2009 the government of Colombia granted the Pentagon the use of seven military bases and a number of other smaller facilities. And Colombia still receives billions in military aid. According to Greg Grandin, Plan Colombia should be understood as “the Latin American edition of GCOIN, or Global Counterinsurgency’ aimed at establishing a “unified, supra-national counterinsurgent infrastructure’, in order to counter what Pentagon planners describe as a fusion between the drugs trade and global terrorism (2010, 9-11).

According to Paul Rexton Kan, associate professor of national security studies at the U.S. Army War College, “The drug trade and warfare have been pushed into a closer relationship by the lack of the overarching global superpower competition, asymmetrical nature of contemporary wars, changes in the patterns of the drug trade, and increasing pace of globalization’ (2009, 94). Kan contends that in the future more and more conflicts will, therefore, be fuelled by the drugs trade. And this will likely give rise to an ever larger number of well-financed and hence also well-armed non-state war-making entities:

[I]nternal or intrastate war is increasingly a misleading moniker. The emergence of organized violence no longer needs to anchor political authority in conventional, bureaucratic, or consent-based structures like the nation-state. The drug trade is speeding this process along. It too is neither dependent on nor bound by the nation-state and has over its history been less and less subject to a variety of local, national, and international enforcement capabilities (Kan 2009, 115).

For Kan, the increasingly close link between the drugs trade and warfare poses a significant challenge for Western nation states insofar as it erodes the distinction between public safety
and national security. He argues that “[f]or the U.S. War on Terrorism, the implications are that it will be ‘unsuccessful without integrating both “a war on drugs” and “a war on crime”’” (2009, 144; quote from Marenko 2002, 63). A number of security pundits are now demanding that, due to the ever more intricate interrelations between drugs trafficking and violent conflict, counter-narcotics efforts should become an integral part of a global U.S. stabilization strategy (Kan 2009; Kilcullen 2005, 2009). This has given rise to the ultimate strategic goal of developing a deterritorialized homeland security capability of global proportions: a spatially and temporally indeterminate capability to execute a sovereign distinction between liberal and illiberal flows of people and resources. However, the U.S. is unlikely to achieve unconventional global military superiority on top of its often totally useless conventional military superiority.

**Conclusion**

The war on drugs in many ways already anticipated the next major U.S. securocratic war: the so-called war on terror. Like the war on terror America’s drug war has proved both spatially and temporally indeterminate. What is more, it has eroded the distinction between war-fighting and policing and hence resulted in a complete intermingling of domestic and international security. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri put it quite succinctly:

> In the context of this cross between military and police activity there is ever less difference between inside and outside the nation-state: low-intensity warfare meets high-intensity policing. The “enemy”, which has traditionally been conceived outside, and the “dangerous classes,” which have traditionally been inside, are thus increasingly indistinguishable from one another and serve together as the object of the war effort (2004, 14-15).

What Hardt and Negri call the “enemy” and the “dangerous classes” are those who are deemed impervious to liberal governance, those who are seen as a threat to liberalism and hence need to be either excluded from liberal society, or eliminated.

Ultimately, the illiberal subject positions produced by Western discourses and practices of security are empty placeholders that can be filled, depending on the political conjuncture, with a
variety of categories: terrorists, insurgents, criminals, immigrants, the undeserving poor, or African Americans, Latinos or Muslims. What all these categories have in common is that they operate within the fundamental Manichaeism opened up by the sovereign decision on who has to be governed through authoritarian means. And this Manichaeism now increasingly operates across and beyond the divide between the domestic and the international sphere.

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