

Migrants in a Neoliberal World

The Tragedy of the Market

As war raged in Iraq in the summer of 2004, the headlines flashed the latest deadly tactic to emerge out of the conflict: Diplomats, politicians, aid workers, contract workers, and labor migrants had become targets of abduction and kidnapping. For the last groups—contract workers and labor migrants—this proved particularly harrowing. Drawn from the transnational working classes of India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka and attracted by wages that provide temporary financial relief in their home countries, these subcontracted workers found themselves at the center of a strategic battle between occupiers and occupied in a web of violence wrought by a war led by the United States.

Amjad Hafeez, the first Pakistani to be abducted, worked as a truck driver for an American food-service company. His capture, which was announced in a widely circulated video, highlighted the importance of visual media as a form of technological warfare in circulating the effects of this strategy. Major television and other news-media outlets throughout the Middle East and South Asia constantly updated the story. Out of the many targeted for kidnapping, some were more vulnerable than others. In particular, truck drivers who navigate public roads based on set routes that make them easy to follow and intercept with little protection or security. Pakistani workers, a prominent part of this workforce, were some of the first people abducted when convoys delivering goods, products, and equipment required by the American military were attacked.

The lives of foreign migrant workers hired by subcontractors to service the U.S. military occupation were thus endangered by a scheme to create instability in the occupying forces' infrastructure and, ultimately, to expose the imperial hubris of the United States. Evidence of this intention circulated in the videotapes sent to media outlets, which were often shot in a simple documentary style. These videos, played relentlessly on Pakistani satellite news programs,

captivated another object—a national audience—with increasing public disapproval of, and protests against, the U.S. military adventure in Iraq in major cities throughout Pakistan.

Hafeez was fortunate to be released after a week of captivity. Two other Pakistanis—Sajid Naeem and Raja Azad Khan, a truck driver and an air-conditioning technician, respectively—were abducted shortly after Hafeez was released and held hostage on the charge that they had collaborated with the American oppressors. Earlier, other victims of kidnapping who had agreed to stop working in occupied Iraq also had been released, but as the strategy unfolded, it became increasingly desperate and lethal. For Naeem and Azad Khan, the unfortunate and grisly end came in videotaped beheadings. Both hailed from the Rawalkot district of Azad Kashmir in Pakistan and had worked for years for the Al Tamimi Group, a Saudi Arabian company in Kuwait. That these Pakistani workers were the product of yet another displacement, brought about by war and conflict between India and Pakistan in the disputed Kashmir region, had little significance to their captors.

The shocking news of their deaths brought the dangers confronting labor migrants to the fore of the Iraq conflict. The brutal tragedy also mapped the linkages among South Asia, the Middle East, and the United States, along with the creation of a labor diaspora of civilian foreign workers by disparate governments, militaries, and multinational corporations. It also recalled the familiar national subject of the migrant in the Pakistani media. As so often happens, the incidents in Iraq provoked a public debate in Pakistan over the promise of pursuing professional careers overseas and the dangers that labor migrants face. With the debate came a growing sense of discomfort within the Pakistani middle class that, in the eyes of the world, all Pakistanis abroad were being stereotyped as labor migrants, an image connoting an uneducated, brutish, people prone to violence and crime. But like all stereotypes, this is far from a full picture.

As kidnappings and abductions—a strategy that increasingly involved armed attacks and assassinations—spread, fear also grew as the new interim government took power in Iraq. Along with Pakistanis, the abductees included Bulgarians, Egyptians, Filipinos, Indians, Jordanians, Kenyans, Kuwaitis, Lebanese, Nepalese, Somalis, Turks, and others. Truck drivers, technicians, construction workers, and cleaners remained the main targets. The abductions began to take on a surreal quality. In late July 2004, seven kidnapped truck drivers were shown on videotape, with one wearing an orange jumpsuit—presumably a reference to the U.S. military prisons at Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo Bay but simulta-

neously the standard uniform of service-economy workers throughout the Persian Gulf region. The kidnappings, coupled with the circulation of the videos, seemed to draw from a tradition of choreographed propaganda spectacle used to evoke both fear and sympathy. The videotapes had an undeniable pathos that stemmed not only from the obvious distress of the victims and the banal ways in which the militant groups presented them, but also from the conditions that had put the workers in a dangerous war zone in which taking sides meant life or death.

In this example, the relationship of these workers to processes of globalization are intimately tied to the ravages of war, a neoliberal capitalist system based on accumulation and dispossession, and the treacherous claims to empire. In the eyes of Iraqi militants, transnational workers are the pawns of U.S. empire; conversely, Iraq has become yet another site from which to obtain labor from workers who must travel far to make ends meet in their home countries. As Hafeeza Begum, the sister of the slain Raja Azad, noted, “We don’t have any enmity with Iraqi people. . . . Why is his life in danger?”¹ Clearly, when she referred to “Iraqi people,” she meant the militants who abducted her brother, yet she was also referring to the job that put his life in jeopardy. Accounts of the fate of foreign workers in Iraq are some of the most immediate descriptions of the recent circuits of neoliberal empire orchestrated by the U.S. in the global economy.²

That Pakistanis are just one national group among many working in U.S.-occupied Iraq points to the complexity of global migration and the social and economic hierarchies created by globalization. In the neoliberal system of global capitalism, the impermanence of transnational work stands in for the temporary labor reserves traditionally held by international migrants that potentially become permanent inhabitants.³ In this process, the meaning of labor migration itself has changed, partly through the dynamics of the migration industry, but also through the meanings attached to migrant workers themselves across the globe.

In collaboration with the state, multinational corporations and labor-subcontracting agencies control the fate of transnational workers. In large part, such labor is subcontracted and based in wage work. In other words, it is made legitimate through labor contracts in which terms are set for the worker and the employer. The risks in this form of labor are quite high, with the stakes being set at the value of life. Contracted work often fails to provide safety guarantees for transnational migrants and often does not ensure their status as legal migrants. Further, as a number of independent humanitarian organiza-

tions note, work conditions across national boundaries and the accountability of sovereign states to their citizens are far from laudatory. As migrant laborers have become one of the foremost commodities traded in the global economy, wage work has become the domain not solely of domestic labor unions but also of workers without frontiers who cross the planet in search of employment.

The extreme dangers of transnational migration raise another important issue: the specter of Islamic militancy. From the viewpoint of the U.S. security state, the greatest threat to American national interests in the contemporary moment is radical Islam in the form of so-called Jihadist culture, an English neologism that obfuscates America's strategic interests by labeling Islamic militancy as "terrorism."⁴ From this geopolitical position, the War on Terror is formulated as an opposing binary: democracy and freedom versus terrorist radicalism and militancy. The Iraqi militants who kidnapped the Pakistani labor migrants are deemed extremists and terrorists—purveyors of evil. But how should the connection of the workers to their militant co-religionists, both of whom are read as Muslim, be understood? And why must these Iraqi militants be read solely in terms of "evil" and "terror," which refute the possibility of their own sense of human freedom?

As Faisal Devji (2008) argues, this dichotomy results from competing notions of humanism in which "humanity," as a concept of aspirational possibility, is stripped from the Islamic militant and that, in the face of terror, distinguishes between lives that should be grieved and those that should not (Asad 2007; Butler 2003, 2009). The immediate argument is that the terrorist militant must be inhuman, without humanity, and subsequently requires eradication for the so-called common good. War in this sense is both political and racial as it emerges from the foundations of an imperial and colonial ideology.⁵ This is racism not simply in the sense of systems of control and hierarchy but also in the sense of determining who lives and dies as a strategy to maintain and legitimize the authority of a colonizing force. For such a rationale, races are populations ascribed an identity as friend or enemy and, more important, are bound and contained by an ideological profile. Such racism as war demands that the technological innovations and improvisations of the military and the media both mask and justify racialization as part of the common good toward the promise of a democratic future.

The recent case of the U.S. war in Iraq is quite literal in following this theory. By exercising power through imperial strategies, the war machine sutured militants to their labor migrant captives. Under the rationale of imperial coloniza-

tion, both militants and migrants are disposable: One is an active military threat; the other is expendable in the service of military conquest. Foreign workers are not only used as low-wage subcontract laborers but are part of an imperial economy in which their worth and value are calculated according to where they are from and who they are as a population. This is not an isolated logic but a historical relationship that connects Islam and Muslims to a conception of race both domestically in the U.S. and in what has been referred to as the global racial system (Mullings 2005; Winant 2001, 2004).

Race is tied to terror and migration precisely through the conjuring of an enemy. The foe is defined in relation not only to democracy and freedom but also to the moral precepts of the ideologically motivated formation of a Christian subject that argues for just war as an obligation of secularity and imperialism. That this enemy is crafted as a *religious* entity, albeit a radically militant one, does not obscure the *racial* nature of the construction. In the overlap of religious and racial identity, historical conflicts are bound to political and social identity. It is in this sense that the terrorist militant and the labor migrant become the racialized “Muslim” in contradistinction to the white European or American Christian. The figures of the terrorist and the migrant are woven together in the figure of “the Muslim” as a racial type; as such, they are historically, ethnologically, and contemporaneously bound to each other. Such a configuration takes many forms and certainly leads to many conclusions. Suffice it to say here that this is the work of what I discuss later as a global system of racializing the Muslim as migrant, criminal, and terrorist.

Imagining South Asian America

Although Pakistan’s cultural, linguistic, and historical affinity is to the South Asian subcontinent, in the post-9/11 Age of Terror, it seems to have shifted geographically to become part of the Middle East. In fact, in the global War on Terror, the Muslim world is increasingly imagined as a single geopolitical mass. Without doubt, the complex overlap of regions including South Asia, Central Asia, the Arab Gulf, and the broader Middle East, has intensified through the connections created by mass migration, satellite technology, and complex financial, social, and cultural flows. As Thomas Blom Hansen (2001a, 2001b) notes in the context of Muslims in India, labor migration provides global horizons to workers who imagine alternative possibilities and social landscapes through travel to the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Europe, and

North America. Although this form of globalization may be laudable, a refiguring of structures of social hierarchy and control is also emerging that distinguishes groups of people through categories of identity.

Accompanying the homogenization of such cultural geographies as the “Muslim world” is the impact of an American nationalism defined in relation to a transnational and global world. The tensions of the category “South Asian American” become apparent when it is used to describe immigrants from Pakistan. “South Asia” as a regional concept has long been dominated by a hegemonic India; in many ways, the terms “South Asia” and “India” are synonymous. In this geography, India is celebrated as a vital democracy and growth economy that is a global competitor, while Pakistan is thought of as a failed state with nuclear capabilities constantly on the brink of running amok. In short, India is Bollywood and technology; Pakistan is terror and trouble (Gopinath 2005a).

Pakistan is thus formulated as a feeder state that produces terrorism to be exported abroad and that stands at the front lines of the War on Terror. The idea of migrating terror is encapsulated in the set of rationales that underlies the policing of labor migration and of immigrant communities. The problem in defining communities in the U.S. in terms of their home countries, however, lies not only in the continuity of homogenized and disarticulated geographies that separate Pakistan from South Asia and that place it into a larger group of Muslim countries and regions but also in complex migrations, foreign policies, and geopolitical strategies of empire building.⁶

Added to these broad configurations of regional geography and political strategy is the influence of the U.S. in South Asia and the Middle East. Pakistan is particularly important to the U.S. as a partner in the global War on Terror through the two countries’ longstanding patron–client relationship. The role of the U.S. in Pakistan is deeply attached to geostrategic security concerns, anti-terrorism and anti-drug campaigns, militarism, and sociocultural development in areas that range from education and infrastructure to the control of international travel and migration. What happens to migrant workers has an impact that reaches far and wide, not only to locations within the U.S., but to other places within the diaspora. The U.S. economy has a vast reach in determining trends within the global economy; thus, migrant workers’ fate is affected by fiscal demands, economic restructuring, and military adventurism. At a global level, labor migrations are put into place as a result of collusion in neoliberal economic policies and the interests of American imperialism (Duggan 2003; Harvey 2003, 2005). At the contemporary juncture, this is manifest in America’s

global War on Terror, which is important not only to the role of Pakistanis in international migration, but the representation of Muslims across the planet.

Defeating terrorism in Pakistan and Afghanistan and controlling migration to U.S. soil have taken on the highest importance for the American security establishment. Indeed, U.S. aid has contributed to the centralization of the domestic military industry in Pakistan (Siddiq 2007). During the War on Terror, the U.S. government is increasingly targeting Pakistani migrants, alongside Arabs and other Muslims and immigrants, for deportation and detention as potential threats to the security of the American people. As an apparatus of the U.S. security state that caters to the public's desire for an appearance of law and order through the purging of manufactured perils, immigrants become a disciplined workforce that embodies these fears. Perils and menaces, such as the "yellow peril" that targeted Asian Americans and the "red menace" of internal communism and socialism, have been constructed throughout U.S. history. The most recent articulation is the "Islamic peril."⁷

Following Inderpal Grewal's (2005) theorization of a transnational America, which argues for a conceptualization that supersedes the territorial boundaries of the U.S. nation-state, I draw on a complex mapping of sovereign nation-states not only at the geopolitical level but also in terms of crafting imaginaries of migration that facilitate increasingly transnational and global theorizations. In such imaginaries, the possibilities and boundaries of everyday migration and the impact of macro-level foreign policies become apparent. Through the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, for example, America was represented as a haven for information-technology workers seeking H-1B visas (non-immigrant visas that allow American employers to employ foreign workers temporarily in specialized occupations), and the consequent ability to move up the global economic ladder. This generated a great deal of interest in temporary migration and guest work among educated and professional people. However, the same narratives of possibility circulated widely among less advantaged and less affluent migrants. Simultaneously, patterns of chain and step migration and shifts in U.S. immigration laws allowed families to reunify, creating new and complex class and social formations in increasingly heterogeneous immigrant communities. Such patterns and structures of migration play an important role in creating the migration fantasy. While television talk shows in the U.S. highlight anti-Americanism in Pakistan and across the Muslim world, America continues to be seen as a land of endless possibility, no matter how tormented this dream has become. The work of imagination is vast when it comes to geography and migration, as I learned in my fieldwork. Take, for

example, one migrant's statement: "When you ask [many Pakistanis] what they think of America, they will criticize everything, but if you gave free visas, all of them would line up to get one."

In this book, I look at transnational workers within the global economy to highlight the relationship between neoliberalism and empire and the formation of worldviews, subjectivities, and life chances. In Weberian terms, these are largely worlds of enchantment and disenchantment in which migrants' lives are crafted through possibility and regulation. Rhetorically, this project asks how Pakistani labor migrants are made sense of and how they make sense of their world in the global economy. But I launch this argument not only from within the confines of the economic sphere, I also engage with the anthropology of globalization to investigate issues of social and cultural formation that drive diasporas into particular relationships—specifically, those that structure and control the possibilities of migrants' lives (Inda and Rosaldo 2008; Ong 1999, 2006; Ong and Collier 2005; Tsing 2005). To explore the themes of globalization and migration, I also look to scholarship on the South Asian diaspora to guide many of my arguments about Pakistani transnational workers.⁸ In addition, this work is indebted to the insight and theoretical approaches forged in the field of transnational cultural studies in the examination of feminism, racism, transnationalism, gender, sexuality, and other relations of power (Grewal 2005; Grewal and Kaplan 1994; Kaplan et al. 1999; Moallem 2005; Puar 2007).

Following recent critiques of South Asian migration (Barbora et al. 2008; Shukla 2001), I expand the notions of one-way and bidirectional migration in favor of models of diaspora that emphasize the multiplicity of movement. In particular, I look at how social formations are constructed in diaspora through chain, step, and seasonal migration based on economic, cultural, social, and political factors. Tracing migration to a source country allows the role of internal migration and the placement of migration hubs in the process of sending and receiving migrant workers to be magnified. The politics of regional migration also plays an important role in crafting migrants' pathways to labor acquisition. In mapping such a labor diaspora, I argue that the social formations produced in home countries and through regional migration are an important aspect of how Pakistani workers are understood through the terms of criminality and deviance that are then racialized in the global War on Terror.

Indeed, for ethnic and racial studies in the United States, the study of Muslim populations spans broad racial and ethnic categorizations. Muslims are found

in African American, Asian American, Arab American, Latina/o, white, and multiracial communities. Despite this ambiguity, the racialized Muslim is mobilized as a unitary figure. To frame my analysis, I evoke “the Muslim” as a category that encompasses many nationalities, social and cultural practices, religious affiliations (from Muslim Sunni and Shia to Christian, Sikh, and Hindu), and social realities that, through the process of state and popular racialization, is generalized.⁹ The system of policing that targets Arab, Muslim, and South Asian immigrants for detention and deportation, as exemplified by the placement of “the Muslim” in the U.S. racial formation under the Bush administration’s War on Terror, is crafted through a broad logic of anti-immigrant racism. What is particularly telling is the disproportionately high number of Pakistanis deported either through forced or voluntary means in the sweeps that followed 9/11.¹⁰ Not only does Pakistan as a country represent terror, danger, and Islamic militancy, but Pakistanis in the U.S. are cast as perilous racial figures of indeterminate standing.

Although I focus on Pakistani migrants in the global economy and on the racialized Muslim under American empire, this work maintains a comparative and interdisciplinary approach. When possible, I have attempted to construct and analyze the issues of my research in relation to other relevant populations and subject matter. Although the ethnographic method is at the core of much of the cultural and material analysis in this book, it is not a conventional ethnography. Instead, I draw on ethnographic fieldwork to weave approaches to political economy, visual and cultural analysis, history, and critical race studies into an interdisciplinary study of the complex issues I elaborate. Specifically, I argue that conceptions of globalized racism are based in the circulation of specific racialized regionalisms that imagine the Muslim world as connected and interdependent. This, in turn, is imagined as part of a geography that connects migratory networks of Muslim countries to the metropolises of Northern countries in the global economy. Relying on ethnographic fieldwork conducted both before and after 9/11, this approach expands the framework of studies of race and migration by placing Muslim migrants into racial formations in the U.S. and as a central part of the global racial system. Within the South Asian diaspora, migrants from Pakistan historically have had a different relationship to the U.S. that is shaped by their identification and racialization as Muslims. Based on ethnographic research with Pakistani migrants, I argue that the economic, cultural, and social effects of neoliberalism have produced the figure of “the Muslim” in the current global economy as racialized.

Racialization and Labor Migration

As theorists of globalization argue, the concepts of transnationalism, diaspora, and migration, often studied in terms of the formation of particular flows and subjectivities (Appadurai 1996), reveal the patterns and processes of the movement of people, things, and ideas as much as they reveal the complex formation of identities and everyday life (Lowe 1996). Throughout this book, I investigate the global service economy, which necessitates class formation in the broadest sense—not only of an economically based class system, but also in terms of the complex subjectivities, desires, and practices that are produced out of transnational migration. The racializing of regional migration on a global scale is based in a social and economic system that is constantly in flux and requires the fixing of certain attributes. In particular, Pakistani migrants working in the global service economy represent part of a larger transnational working class that is racialized in multiple locations.

Nonetheless, it is important to point out the contingent nature of this designation both in terms of the mobilization of class as an analytical category and in terms of the impact of racializing discourses. An important attribute of any working class, without doubt, is its connection to wage-based labor and its incorporation into a capitalist system. But such an analysis is limited in certain ways to a specific political economy. Although I do not preclude such an understanding in my framework, I wish to unsettle and disrupt it in favor of a complex intersectional approach that not only understands class in relation to other categories of analysis and is wary of the categories themselves, but that also can dynamically shift according to context and historical location. In the production of representations of the Pakistani Muslim migrant, the concept of race is deeply intertwined with particular ideas about class and gender that, throughout the labor diaspora, have contrasting, conflicting, and sometimes oppositional meanings. Simultaneously, this migrant subjectivity is imbued with the values and beliefs attached to the concepts of illegality, criminality, and terrorism.

The figure of the Muslim in contemporary global discourse is already saturated with racialized, sexualized, and gendered terms, including, but not limited to, “terrorism,” “fundamentalism,” “clash of civilizations,” “panic,” “peril,” “hetero-patriarchy,” “oppression of women,” “Taliban,” “violent masculinity,” “queered,” “homophobic,” “warlike,” “fanatical,” “radical,” and “barbaric.” In Pakistan, the majority of labor migrants are male and working class.¹¹ Hence, a transnational masculinity is found in the dynamics of

these populations that I specifically describe as a labor diaspora. This masculinity is complicated in the experience of migration, in which the family must be refigured to maintain a patriarchal order. The social effects of class, race, and religion are intimately connected to these newly configured patriarchies that have varied meanings throughout the diaspora; for this reason, specific migration circuits have particular effects on subject formation. Thus, the male transnational worker from Pakistan is understood as inhabiting a particular kind of racialized masculinity from the viewpoint of so-called liberal-democratic publics and a simultaneous transnational class formation from the viewpoint of neoliberal capitalism that requires a service economy. Although complex in their formation, race and class for these workers are often subsumed in the characterization of migrant illegality. As a trait of the global economy, such a construction is tied to the legal apparatuses mandated by states and by the realities of complex global markets that cannot be regulated.

These overlapping frames of racialization and class formation come together in particular notions of underground economies and migrant illegality in which people and commodities are smuggled and trafficked through extralegal and extra-state spaces that are often portrayed as the global economy's dark underbelly. Although these issues are linked to economic vulnerability and structures of dominance, the relationship of these concepts to poverty and processes of migration is particularly vexed and troubling (Shah 2007, 2008). Such a configuration often unifies structures of poverty with illegality by using metaphors of terrorism and criminality to describe alternative markets. Primary components of these underground markets include migrants, sex work, cash, goods, drugs, terror, and smuggling networks such that illegal and criminal activities are conflated into a totalizing system. Here descriptions and theories of underground economies are placed in a netherworld of abjection that renders individual agency impossible, and the migrant worker is reduced to classifications of illegality and criminality.

Yet global labor migration is fraught with all sorts of possibilities, desires, and unexpected outcomes that transcend reductive structural explanations. Transnational work, at the outset, is a clear economic necessity in the absence of opportunity in home countries. Such labor also represents desires for transnational class mobility, or what I have tried to complicate in terms of work in the global service economy. What is considered working-class labor in the global North may lead to middle-class stability, status, and values in the global South. Such systems of capital mobilization also rely on wide transnational social and kinship networks that create complex ideas of family units (Mathew 2005: 167–

75). In these circumstances, social networks are heightened in terms of fictive kin and intimate relations. Migration in certain ways disrupts the heteronormative order in what Nayan Shah (2001) has called queer domesticity, so that heterosexual migrants are queered as non-normative. For ethnographies of Muslims in the post-9/11 world, the study of gender and sexuality through the lens of racialized masculinity reveals a wide variety of important insights into the effects of stigmatization (Ewing 2008a, 2008b; Maira 2009; Naber 2006). Migration studies have often normalized heterosexuality without a proper framework to understand queer and non-normative desires, practices, and subjectivities (Gopinath 2005b; Manalansan 2006). The act of migration itself might be understood as a liberating practice of desire and pleasure that in important ways highlights not only erotic socialities, but also other forms of non-sexual imagining that are fraught with structural barriers and impossibilities. For some, migration is a near impossibility that must be scrutinized and planned, while for others, access to migration schemes can seem preordained.

Transnational Classes in the Labor Diaspora

The political economy of oil and the financial dominance of the dollar have shaped the multiple migrations from South Asia most immediately to the Middle Eastern countries of the Persian Gulf region (and now, notably, Iraq),¹² then to Europe and North America, as destinations to obtain income. The petrodollar economy increased the flow of cash available to the Gulf countries to fund the massive construction projects on which many South Asian labor migrants have toiled since the 1970s.¹³ As mega-city projects have spread, countries such as Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar have attracted so many migrant workers that their foreign populations are now larger than their domestic populations. Labor migration, in turn, is an enormous boon to the domestic economies of South Asian countries, which send workers to the Gulf, relieving unemployment at home, and receiving remittances from them. For the labor migrants themselves, access to travel, work, and wages, and the economic and cultural changes that stem from the dynamic process of migration, create new social relationships. Besides work experience, they gain social networks and economic resources to fund migration to other countries and regions of the world.

The development of working-class migration from Pakistan has a particular history that emerged out of the crisis of the Pakistani state in the 1970s.¹⁴ Labor-union busting in Pakistan originated in the 1950s, influenced by econo-

mists from Harvard University who arrived in the country with plans to modernize its economy. By the late 1970s, during the regime of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, organizing by domestic labor unions in Pakistan effectively had been crushed. The goals of these policies, in the words of one of the main architects, were based on “squeezing the peasant” to build an industrialist class through the “social utility of greed” (Papanek 1967). The policies set in motion a developmental model aimed at achieving industrialization that was put into practice across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The model, subsequently, exacerbated class differences by decreasing the resources available for agriculture and increasing poverty, all the while generating data that perpetuated the dependence model for development aid. The social upheaval this kind of development brought about in Pakistan sustained the argument in favor of subsidies and loans from international donors and the gradual liberalization of the Pakistani economy that continued into the early 1990s (Zaidi 2005).

The failure of organized labor to gain adequate protection from domestic trade-union laws played an important role in the flight of the laboring classes to transnational locations. Indeed, in the 1970s, as domestic labor unions were weakened, unemployed and underemployed Pakistanis looked for opportunities outside their home country. In the 1980s and 1990s, the migrants were popularly dubbed the *Dubai chalo* working class in contrast to the “Amrikan” Pakistani, revealing a split class system of transnational migrants.¹⁵ The multiplicity of diasporic destinations and experiences among migrants consistently challenges such assumed categories. Nonetheless, the imagined migratory hierarchy remains educated professionals working predominantly in the U.S. and Europe, contrasted with unskilled laborers who toil on construction sites in Dubai and elsewhere in the Gulf region. Labor migrants from Pakistan, however, find their way to places all over the globe in search of work, education, and opportunity.

Pakistani migration parallels that of other South Asian countries. Indeed, many who participate in working-class migrations find themselves in categories that essentialize their social identity when they are working abroad. This results partially from the process of framing “labor” and “worker” as class categories, but it also results from racialized and gendered discourses of identity. This is to say that class position in a society is based on the kind of work one does and on one’s access to capital. In this sense, class can be analyzed comparatively in terms of societal conceptions of work and the value attributed to different types of labor. Class is also a cultural construct that must be understood through its intersections with other social categories of analysis.

Thus, transnational labor migration from Pakistan has its own history that must be placed in the larger framework of regional and global patterns of labor migration.

When I use the terms “transnational classes” and “labor diaspora,” I am referring to the condition of certain groups structured and formed in relation to one another, as well as to E. P. Thompson’s (1966) famous evocation of class as a relational category. Class, as a complicated assertion that is illustrated through the contingencies of location and historical context, can have multiple meanings and positions in a diasporic context. In Pakistan, a worker’s migration abroad may allow for a middle-class existence at home, yet the worker’s status, salary, and position in the global economy compels a reading of belonging to a temporary working class.¹⁶ This form of casual labor is often referred to as a contingent class in relation to the kind of work that is performed, and the contingent class under neoliberal capitalism is an underclass that gets by with temporary work. Thus, the complex notion of a transnational class depends largely on location, position, and social identity.

Alongside this class theory is an economic order that is defined by social, cultural, and political relationships. Particular features such as ethnicity, kinship, and social networks, as well as access to capital and other resources, allow certain migrants to enter the global economy as workers while others are excluded. Converting such social and cultural capital into economic forms comes through a certain sense of the world—what Pnina Werbner (1999), in the context of Pakistani working-class migration, has called a cosmopolitan attitude. These ethnic worlds of migration are ways to re-create cultural forms and systems in new social circumstances in which competition is stiff and access to capital is limited. Such cosmopolitanism implies the possibility of assuming multiple positions in contradictory circumstances, a worldliness that shows how multiple life worlds are imagined and structured.

In terms of globalization, labor migration has become a central component of the capitalist system. The state plays a great role in shaping transnational migration by generating the demand for labor migrants through guest-worker systems and the building of temporary labor reserves. Such flows increasingly follow a pattern of multiple migration circuits in which transnational laborers find access to work and to the accumulation of forms of capital. This process is in large part mediated by the state and by state-like institutions. I argue that, although “the state” is a complex, contradictory, and multifaceted concept, it appears as a uniform entity. That is, the state is not an integral, absolute concept; it is fractured through multiple actors, intentions, and rationalities that,

under the neoliberal model, promote the production of state-like effects by non-state institutions alongside those of the state. Thus, state-like effects can be found in multiple arenas without direct state intervention.¹⁷ For example, in the case of the Pakistani state and labor migration, international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund mandate a template for market reform in which corporate actors in the private sphere are responsible for contracting transnational labor. This was once the domain of the state in the public sphere. The state seeks to balance these spheres of international and private interests while reproducing them as its own. The multiplicity of state effects mediates the process of transnational labor migration by controlling such populations and creating a system in which multiple migration circuits take place.

As shorthand for policies, structures, bureaucracies, political actors, internalized logics, rationales, subjectivities, positions, strategies, and tactics, the state more often than not is more than it claims—and more than is possible. As a character that takes on multiple forms, it is not easily defined and contained conceptually as a coherent set of practices, intentions, or governmentalities. Yet, the state seeks to control, regulate, discipline, police, and restrict labor migration through repertoires and technologies of governance that give it a sense of omniscience. Following the important work that has denaturalized the state by examining it as contingent and contradictory and as containing multiple intentions (e.g., Abrams 1988 [1977]; Aretxaga 2003; Corrigan 1994, 2002; Corrigan and Sayer 1985; Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Mitchell 1991, 2002; Scott 1998; Trouillot 2001), I examine the relationship of the state to migration in multiple social and cultural arenas: as a major component of localized practices of everyday life and as a macro-political actor in broader political and social issues. As an abstracted cast member with many roles, the state takes on different identities and names: modern state, police state, racial state, colonial state, capitalist state, imperial state, neoliberal state, warfare state, failed state, postcolonial state, military state, ghost state, and on and on toward the mad-denying state.¹⁸ “The state” is a pivotal concept on which much of this book is organized, and I examine it in relation to the formation of labor diaspora and the global racial system that is fully elaborated in chapter 4.

In the aftermath of the tragic attacks on the World Trade Center and elsewhere on September 11, 2001, Muslims and Islam came to the foreground of the national imagination in the U.S. as a threat and an enemy. This was followed by a backlash against Muslims and “terrorist-looking” populations in a reign of racial terror that restated the problem of race. This was not strictly an American phenomenon: An effort to define and identify Muslims as friend or foe took place on a global scale. Far from an isolated incident in the post-9/11 world, this resurgent racism is part of a complex and old conceptualization of Muslims and Islam. Global systems of racial formation for some time have categorized Muslims as a racial group. As I demonstrate in chapter 1, “the Muslim” as a figure was racialized in the early formation of the concept of race in the so-called Age of Conquest.

In the context of labor migration from the South Asian subcontinent, many of the historical threads that link race to South Asian labor date to social formations established in what historians call the imperial age of Indian Ocean migrations (Bose 2006; Metcalf 2007). Indians traveled the world, from Malaya to East Africa to the Caribbean, as laborers and soldiers. Defined as “martial races” based on a kind of racial thinking that relied on colonial ideas of religious and ethnic difference, South Asians were recruited to work and fight for the British Empire. For example, Punjabi Muslims and Sikhs often were thought of as dutiful, disciplined, and hardworking soldiers, but when conflicts with Muslim lands increased as the British Empire expanded, Muslims increasingly were deemed untrustworthy.

In an ironic twist of imperial substitution in the early twentieth century, the British preceded the U.S. in invading Iraq. During the First World War, the British sent Indian troops on a military campaign in what was then called Mesopotamia (largely modern-day Iraq) and attempted to oust its Turkish rulers. The goal was to maintain Indian trade routes and secure important oilfields and a pipeline that had been established in Persia (contemporary Iran), and, subsequently, to establish another colony for the empire. Even as Indian troops secured the British Empire’s military aims, the harsh conditions drove some deserters to join the Ghadar Party in San Francisco, a revolutionary diasporic group that sought independence for India. At first, Indian laborers were unwilling to honor work contracts because they feared the violence in Iraq, but they were ultimately delivered via a system of confinement in military-camp depots

on their way to labor sites. The use of restricted environments to recruit laborers and stop desertion evolved into the employment of prisoners from Indian jails, who were offered remission from their sentences in exchange for labor. Creating an Indian administration in occupied Iraq meant acquiring colonial knowledge, and developing the Indian colony there included introducing colonial legal codes and revenue surveys established by the British, as well as an initially Indian-led police force and government bureaucracy. The experiment in Mesopotamia lasted five years, allowing the British to turn India into a sub-center of the empire while also looking to other colonies, such as those in East Africa, for potential bureaucratic and legal structures to take to the new colony in Iraq. Indian soldiers and laborers were never to be permanent inhabitants of the new Iraq; they were used as a workforce to secure the gains of the British Empire (Metcalf 2007). However, this brief colonial encounter established a relationship to Indian laborers that persisted into the twenty-first century.

These patterns of imperial migration therefore established South Asia as a source of military and manual labor. Indeed, the imperial rationale behind categorizing Indians as a “martial race” perpetuated a racial system of classification that, in the present day, has become a complex and structurally amplified global racial system. Muslims and Sikhs were used in the military and police forces because of what the British claimed to be these groups’ violent nature. Other groups were also believed to be predisposed to particular occupations—for example, tribals as indentured laborers and Gujaratis and Tamils as traders. Workers were often described as “coolies,” a racial description that encompassed people from many different populations. Chinese workers notoriously were referred to as “coolies” (Jung 2006; Yun 2008), but so were Arabs and South Asians in the labor camps built by American oil interests in Saudi Arabia (Vitalis 2007).

The British imperial system in the Indian Ocean that was established roughly between 1830 and 1930 thus created many of the patterns and routes, as well as the knowledge, of South Asian labor migrants that continue to resonate in the global economy. This Indian Ocean model expanded globally so that transnational workers still face the same issues as those established under the British Empire. American imperial interests, significantly in Iraq and Afghanistan, rely on these old patterns while creating new ones. It is under this rationale that the global War on Terror identifies the Middle East and South Asia as trouble spots even as these regions have become globalized in the expanding imperial reach for labor migrants.

Book Summary

As this chapter's opening vignette demonstrated, the complex migration flows from South Asia to the Middle East and to the U.S. are articulated in complex registers that I examine in the confluence of history, media and film representation, and ethnographic evidence. The book takes as its organizing parameters the themes of history and context, process and structure, institutions, and the role of the body in material life. Following the elegant analysis in *Frames of War* (2009), in which Judith Butler untangles the implications of the U.S.-led War on Terror, this book is divided into two sections that frame the conceptual relationships of race and migration and of the state and migration. As an interdisciplinary study, this work addresses the use of the categories of race and racism on Muslim bodies as they circulate in the global economy through concepts, media images, popular culture, narratives of migration and diaspora, and the production of illegality, criminality, and terror. As ethnography, it explores the multiple ways these racial categories are produced to place Pakistani labor migrants in the historical formation of the global racial system.¹⁹

Part I, "Racializing Muslims," begins with a conceptual analysis and history of the idea of race in the global circulation and formation of the racialized Muslim. This is followed by chapters on racial events and ethnographic cinema since 9/11. Taken together, the chapters in part I frame the elaborate process of racialization that has figured Muslims and Pakistani immigrants working in the global service sector as threats in the War on Terror. Using an interdisciplinary approach that combines historical and ethnological argument, media analysis, and critique of visual culture, I argue that the internal logics of racialization figure Muslims as a broad population that encompasses multiple nationalities, ethnic groups, and cultural experiences but that also depends on the peculiarities of the global economy and neoliberal capitalism.

In part II, "Globalizing Labor," I advance these conceptual arguments by outlining how South Asian migration and labor diaspora historically have been part of the global racial system and by providing an ethnography of the migration industry that produces workers in formal and illicit systems of labor diaspora. For Pakistani migrant workers, "illegality" is constructed throughout the diaspora that is pivotal to their transnational experiences and labor struggles. The final chapter of part II examines the post-9/11 world of racial terror and violence as seen in the U.S. detention and deportation system and in the migration patterns that have resulted in massive returns to Pakistan and other parts of the diaspora from the United States.

In chapter 1, “Islam and Racism,” I introduce the concepts of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism and contextualize them in terms of the place of the figure of the Muslim in the Euro-American imagination. I construct this argument by providing ethnological evidence obtained from historical, literary, legal, and cultural archives. The chapter examines the historical construction of the figure of the Muslim and the concepts of race and Islamophobia. The Muslim is constructed as a threat to white Christian supremacy and in relation to anti-Jewish racism by employing a racial logic that crosses the cultural categories of nation, religion, ethnicity, and sexuality. The development of a religiously based racism, or Islamophobia, is grounded in a history of racial ascription of bodily comportment, superimposition, and dissimulation. These are all components of a theory of Muslim racial formation in which I trace the figure of “the Muslim” in the ethnological archive to conceptualize the contemporary racialization of Muslim communities, particularly under the U.S. racial formation and global racial system. Further, I explain Islamophobia through the workings of the biopolitics of the racialized body that is essential to the rationale of the U.S. racial state. The argument in chapter 1 traces the conceptual apparatus for how Muslim immigrant communities are placed in the U.S. racial formation and in the global racial system.

Chapter 2, “Racial Panic, Islamic Peril, and Terror,” explores the role panics and perils have played in creating a vocabulary of terror in the U.S. racial formation. From evidence gathered surrounding two events—one an instance of moral panic and the other, of peril—I argue that such racial constructions are instrumental in anti-immigrant narratives and in forming conceptions of illegality. It is through this logic that transnational migrants are located as both religious and racial subjects in the U.S. public sphere and through which Muslims, with their patterns of multiple migration, become state targets of fear and panic. Chapter 2 is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in New York and in Lahore, Pakistan, after 9/11. Its argument is based on an analysis of how race and religion are combined in a rhetorical strategy that draws on terror, as well as illegality and criminality, to police migrants and control immigration.

Chapter 3, “Imperial Targets,” examines the logic of the U.S. racial formation that, in recent times, has collapsed identities through ideas of race, culture, and religion. The history of these categories of race making are particularly vexing in the case of U.S. populations of Middle Eastern and South Asian descent, who are broadly racialized as “Muslims.” The media, scholars, and activists now use the unwieldy categories of “the Muslim,” “the Arab,” and “the South Asian” to describe groups targeted for racial discrimination, violent

hate crimes, and state policing. I argue, however, that Pakistani immigrants in the U.S. are simultaneously understood as South Asian and Middle Eastern, a classification that combines national origin, religion, ethnicity, and culture into a unitary conception of race and racial formation. Based on a critical analysis of visual culture—specifically, ethnographic cinema—I show how the racial figure of the Muslim is collapsed into an amorphous category and examine how this rationale is used in the construction and policing of Pakistani and Muslim migrants.

Chapter 4, “Labor Diaspora and the Global Racial System,” contains an extensive ethnography of how the migration industry produces migrants, and it explores the racial and class implications of labor flows in the global racial system. In chapter 4, I also compare contemporary labor migration with that of indentured labor of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century both to describe the processes of exploitation in these labor diasporas and to argue for an alternate conceptualization of the transnational labor market. Juxtaposing the historical moment of indentured labor with the contemporary migration industry provides insight into the role that labor contracts play in the formation of labor migrants and the subsequent meaning of informal labor practices and notions of illegality. Through an ethnography of the migration industry in Pakistan, I trace the development of these patterns and the inclusion of migrants within the global economy and as a central component of the global racial system.

In chapter 5, “Migration, Illegality, and the Security State,” I trace the relationship of Pakistani migrants within the state systems of transnational migration between Pakistan, the Persian Gulf, and the United States. To do this, I rely on ethnographic research I conducted both before and after 2001. As I argue, the historical relationship of the state to migration in Pakistan and abroad is pivotal to the production of transnational workers as an economic and social class. This occurs in terms of their place within the domestic economy and within international and transregional economies and is most immediately visible in labor migration to countries of the Persian Gulf region. This relationship itself demarcates Pakistani workers within a larger labor diaspora. On the U.S. side, what has emerged since 9/11 is a pattern of governance in a domestic War on Terror that seeks to identify potential criminality through broad concepts of migrant illegality and deportability. The identification of criminality is itself constructed through broad historical practices of demonizing and racializing migrants. Chapter 5 argues for an ethnographic study of the state through the issue of subject formation and the concept of the production of legality and

illegality. Negotiating the terms of the state system for labor migrants is therefore also an important aspect of how the labor of migrants is constructed. As legal subjects, labor migrants are placed within the fields of power of the state that constructs migrant subjectivities in a dynamic that oscillates between legality and illegality.

In chapter 6, “The Muslim Body,” I examine how social processes are inscribed into, and disciplined on, the immigrant body through the detention and deportation regime and the process of return migration. In doing so, I trace how the Muslim body is constructed through fear and anxiety but also as a site of containment and control. In my ethnographic research, I tracked return migration from the United States to Pakistan as a component of the recent history of detentions and deportations of Muslim immigrants—largely Arab and South Asian—since 2001. I examine how migration creates a site of memory and embodiment of bodily comportment, as well as the role of the racialized affect of fear and anxiety on the construction and literal disappearance of the Muslim body in the global War on Terror. Indeed, terror is diffuse in these multiple entanglements of sovereignty and in the everyday life of what is also a war on immigration. In this sense, I ask not only how the body is imagined as a site of containment and control through the policing of immigration, but also how this social process reproduces sovereignty in spaces of self-governance and zones of autonomous state-sanctioned force such as detention.

The conclusion, “Racial Feelings in the Post-9/11 World,” reflects on the comparative and intersectional implications for research on the effect of 9/11 on the U.S. racial formation, the theory of a global racial system, and the future of critical race studies. By examining a critical depiction of Muslim migrant workers, the book closes with the imagined future of labor diaspora.