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Book Review of The Endgame of Globalization

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Book Review
The End-game of Globalization

by
Neil Smith

(New York/London, Routledge, 2005), 227 pages.

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Anti-War scholars and activists alike have continuously blamed the Bush administration and Neoconservative Warlords inside the beltway in Washington for leading the US into the Iraq War; they claim that the War was launched because of American Oil interests in the Middle East and transnational corporations played a role in provoking the state through their influence. However, other academicians such as Neil Smith, a brilliant scholar and student of David Harvey, in addition to a political theorist and geographer, rather argues that this justification doesn't explain the background and deeper context of this global domination which began in the early 20th Century. According to Smith, there is a direct relationship between American Hegemonic Power and the Iraq War; one that is deeply rooted in American Neo-liberal Imperialism. Neoliberalism is not just an economic ideology; it is also political and cultural spectrum. Even though Ronald Reagan was a conservative politician, he was the first political leader to use the neoliberal agenda in the shaping of US foreign policy. On the other hand, Clinton also had similar economic and political views in terms of American Foreign policy. Smith argues that these two very different political personalities might have contrasting views, but they are very similar in terms of the larger and long-term project of American Imperialism, which is based on American national interest. Smith also argues that the 'war in Iraq should be comprehended as part of a US globalism' (viii).

In his critical analysis of *the Endgame of Globalization*, Neil Smith argues that this recent occupation is not a new phenomenon for the American Empire but rather it is a continuation of the soul of historical colonialism. The only difference between the old and new form of

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colonialism is that ‘what makes the present moment so dangerous is that while neither of these earlier presidents started the wars that became vehicles to their global ambitions, this time it was an American president who started the Iraq War and extrication is therefore unlikely to be a simple matter’ (VIII). According to Smith, the American Empire has attempted to reshape world politics three times and in so doing has tried to impose its hegemonic power in the 20th century. The first attempt failed due to the rejection of the US from entry to the League of Nations under F. D. Roosevelt; the second attempt took place in the 1940s, especially after WWII, when the US tried reshape the World Politics; and the most recent attempt began in the 1960s and continued with the financial restructuring of Bretton Woods and finally with the occupation of Iraq, as the last point in this continuum. Smith claims that all of these attempts have failed for the same reason; the globalization of American Neoliberal ideas combined and related with the hard edge of American Nationalism.

Smith looks carefully at the origin of Iraq at the beginning of 20th century and claims that Iraq did not even exist before the 1920’s. Similar to American Occupation – or the so-called liberation of Iraq, British Colonialism created what is now known as Iraq; however in 2001, in comparison to the earlier British invasion; Iraqis were ‘liberated,’ but the country was concurrently patronized through the use of symbols such as the American flag, used as a substitution for the Statue of Saddam Hussein within Baghdad. Smith also sees this new process as a US-centered global hegemony, which is in my view the political face of ‘McDonaldization.’ However, this new trend also represents the other side of the coin; the declining power of the American Empire (12). According to Smith, ‘the purpose of this book is to provide an alternative perspective, rooted in a historico-geographical reading of US global power and its contradictions’ (13). The author argues that American domination has historical roots, based on being an Empire and more recently these policies have been endorsed by an exclusionary American Nationalist Elite in order to create the global promise of a certain kind of Americanism; American Globalism. Consequently, the US hegemonic strategy has shifted from freedom, equality and human rights to core US interest-based policies. Later in the book, Smith claims that this is an economic War of the US (15). An economic shift from an industrial to a finance-based

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structure in developed nations including the US, Britain and France can now be understood as shift in the *method* of imperialism.

The shift in American Policy can be seen more clearly in the context of the conflict between PNAC, the project of the new American century (a Neoconservative Washington based think-tank), and the Council on Foreign Relations (a Neoliberal New York based think-tank). This brotherly struggle between two think-tanks can be understood as 'authoritarian unilateralism' versus Clinton's 'liberal internationalism,' however both are based on American interests and globalization, which as this analysis demonstrates consists of Americanization through an imposition of the American understanding of freedom, democracy and human rights on the world. Smith does not distinguish between the foreign policy of Republicans versus that of Democrats (21). Smith claims that this new trend can be referred to as the new imperialism, in contrast to old style colonialism. Smith also claims that American globalism and the American empire also have liberal roots (28). As he states, 'American globalism from Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson to Bill Clinton and George Bush is the consummate expression of the liberalism that was founded in the US' (51). In the book, he claims that the second moment of US global ambition can be seen in the establishment of Bretton Woods and the United Nations. (82) Smith is highly critical towards American globalization; he sees this as the rise of so-called globalization (122). However, Smith views this new attempt at imposing an imperial agenda as having resulted in the bankruptcy of Liberalism; demonstrated most clearly under the Guantanamo Conventions, and is a clear continuation of American Globalization by military means (149).

In conclusion to this analysis of Smith's *The Endgame of Globalization*, the author views one of the biggest conflicts in the recent attempt of reshaping the world politics as that which follows the Iraq War; uncovered in broad daylight as what he describes as the contradictions of US liberalism in the light of War (177). Smith argues that the shift from the Neoliberalism of the 1990s, to 21st century Neoconservatism is the sharpest political turn that has been taken in American History; therefore, the war in Iraq can be seen as US Globalism and as a clear demonstration of its hegemonic power and as the metaphorical flexing of its hegemonic muscles. In this book, *The Endgame of Globalization*, his more recent work, we are presented with very much a con-

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tinuation of his earlier work, *American Empire: Roosevelt's Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization*. In order to understand his standpoint in political theory, I recommend that you first read *American Empire* to provide the necessary context for a more full understanding of the *Endgame of Globalization*.

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