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The imperial entanglements of 'Education in Emergencies': from saving souls to saving schools?

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ABSTRACT

This paper reflects historically and contemporaneously on the relationship between 'International Education and Development' actors and foreign intervention in our colonial past and present, with a particular focus on Education in Emergencies (EiE), a sub-field of research and practice within 'International Education and Development'. Theoretically, this work is underpinned by a critical application of the 'implicated subject', Rothberg's (2019) conceptual addition to the study of violence and injustice which seeks to go beyond binaries of 'victim and perpetrator' and recognise the way many others are 'implicated' in systems of violence and injustice. In the first section we explore this framing for researchers and practitioners in the field of EiE and the complex ways that researchers and practitioners might be understood as 'implicated subjects'. In the second part we explore two dimensions of EiE actors as 'implicated subjects': Diachronic and Synchronic. In the diachronic dimension we highlight the way the colonial past hangs heavy in the present and in the synchronic dimension we explore the case of Afghanistan, and the links between military, development and education strategy. In the conclusion we reflect on their implication for improved ethical practices in EiE and in the broader field of International Education and Development.

Introduction

The withdrawal of US led occupying forces from Afghanistan in August 2021 led to a lot of soul-searching amongst the international community. The Education in Emergencies (EiE) community[1] has been part of the chorus of voices lamenting US led departure and defending the educational gains of the occupation. While we don't doubt the sincerity of these laments, nor the evidence of educational development and gender inclusion in Afghanistan over recent years – and the threat to these advances by the Taliban's return to power, we do however seek to contextualise these educational and human rights gains in relation to the parallel costs of Western-led intervention, war and occupation. According to Professor Neta Crawford and Professor Catherine Lutz, co-directors of the 'Cost of War Project' at Brown University's Watson Institute, there have been an estimated 176,000 deaths and more than 46,000 Afghan civilians killed since the US led invasion in 2001.[2] Similarly, we also seek to note that of the nearly US$1 trillion spent by the United States between 2001 and 2021 in Afghanistan, 86% was spent on US military outlays and only a tiny fraction went on supporting education (0.13%).[3] Placing these statistics in relation to the evident educational

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gains provides us with an initial way in to reflect on our own field of research and practice's involvement and responsibility for both the former and the latter, and their complex inter-relationship.

For the last three decades we have seen an increasing merging of security and development, that grew out of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold war, but which intensified after 9/11 (Duffield 2001; 2007; Gregory 2004; Novelli 2010). Initially justified under the guise of 'humanitarian intervention', Western led military operations and Western led development operations have become increasingly intertwined and raise complex ethical questions for those of us who see ourselves as part of this 'development community'. Whilst some seek to deny the relationship and separate out our field of research and practice from its military 'allies', others reify and praise it as a necessary and even positive force (Beebe and Kaldor 2010); while a small, but growing part of our community are slowly waking up to these relationships and beginning to think through the ethical, political, and developmental implications of our uneasy military entanglements and our potential response (Duffield 2001; 2007; Gregory 2004; Novelli 2010). While distinct, we make the case that there are parallels between these contemporary development/military entanglements and the colonial era where social/spiritual and military policy and practice operated as two sides of an imperial coin (Kothari 2005a; 2005b; 2006). Today, the bible and the gun have been replaced by the peacekeeping/humanitarian intervention/mission and the missionary by the (I)NGO and the aid worker.

This is the focus of our paper and we hope to make a contribution to better articulating these issues and relationships, difficult though they are, in the education sector. In order to attempt to frame our discussion theoretically in an open and reflexive way, the work is underpinned by a critical application of the 'implicated subject', Rothberg's (2019) conceptual addition to the study of violence and injustices which seeks to go beyond the binaries of 'victim and perpetrator' and recognise the way many others are 'implicated' and carry responsibility for violence and injustice.

We don't presume to have all the answers, and recognise ourselves as 'implicated subjects' in these processes and practices. However, we do feel strongly that we need an open discussion around our field of research and practice's complex entanglements with systems of violence and oppression. Furthermore, we believe that if we as education researchers and practitioners working in EiE don't become active subjects, we will become objects of others' political projects, as we believe has been the case in far too many recent conflicts – past and present.

In terms of our own positionality in this process. One of the authors of this paper (Novelli) has been engaged with the field of EiE for the last twenty years and contributed to a wide range of debates. He has written on a variety of issues, including the killing and persecution of teachers in Colombia (Novelli 2009), the killing of aid workers and educators in Iraq and Afghanistan (Novelli 2011); the role of education in peacebuilding (c.f Novelli and Smith 2011) the militarisation of aid to education (Novelli 2010; 2013), critiques of the use of education in deradicalization programmes (Novelli 2017), the role of teachers in peacebuilding (Novelli and Sayed 2016) and a wide range of other issues. He has also worked with and for a range of international agencies, including DFID, UNICEF, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and INEE. Throughout this period, while attempting to engage constructively with actors in the field (practitioners, aid workers, policy-makers, academics) he has often been critical of the selective focus of much research and practice and the inherent westo-centric biases in the field (c.f. Novelli et al. 2014; Novelli and Lopes Cardozo 2008). The second author (Kutan) has also experienced tensions and contradictions in their relationship to the international community and international intervention. As an ex-human rights worker in Turkey, as an ethnic Kurd, and as an early career researcher, she has experienced the often complex and ambiguous actions of the 'international community' in its engagements with 'conflict affected' contexts. She has long witnessed the silence of the international community to both Turkey's repression and persecution of the Kurds, and wider opposition movements, in return for Turkey's engagement in NATO (historically), and welcoming Syrian refugees and siding with the West in the new and emerging Cold War (in the present).

In the next section, we will explore Rothberg's (2019) 'implicated subject' and then reflect on what this framing might mean for researchers and practitioners in the field of EiE. In doing so

we focus on the complex ways that we – as practitioners and researchers – might be understood as 'implicated subjects' in systems of violence and injustice. In the second part of the paper, we then explore two dimensions of the way EiE actors might be understood as 'implicated subjects': diachronic and synchronic. In the diachronic dimension we highlight the way the colonial past hangs heavy in the present and make the case for a much stronger definitional link between 'colonialism' and 'development', emphasising the often-false separation within International Development studies and the continuity of processes and practices. In this we pay particular attention to the way 'soft' and 'hard' sides of colonial strategy operated symbiotically and evidence parallel occurrences in contemporary Western-led military/development activities. In the synchronic dimension, we explore the case of Afghanistan, and the links between military and development strategy as we move from Soviet occupation, Taliban rule, Western-led Military occupation and eventual US-led departure, highlighting the way the EiE community are implicated in a range of systems of violence and injustice. In the conclusion we pull together the findings, and reflect on their implication for both greater awareness and improved ethical practices in EiE and in the broader field of International Education and Development.

The implicated subject and EIE as a field of research and practice

In recent years, from the Rhodes Must Fall protests that began in South Africa, to the Black Lives Matter Movement that exploded onto the global political stage after the murder of George Floyd in 2020, many countries, institutions and individuals have begun to revisit difficult issues that link the present to the past in relation to colonialism, slavery, imperialism and racism (Andrews 2021). These debates, while fundamentally important, have often become polarised and divisive: the language of oppressor and oppressed, innocent and guilty, victim and perpetrator often fail to capture the complexities of identities, relationships and degrees of responsibility for both past and present atrocities, and often close down processes of both dialogue and reconciliation.

One possible way of moving these debates forward emerges from the work of Michael Rothberg (2019). Dissatisfied with the categories of Victims, Perpetrators and Bystanders, he developed the concept of the 'implicated subject' to better articulate the complex ways that we are connected to injustices past and present, whether conscious or not. For Rothberg 'implicated subjects' '*play essential roles in producing and reproducing violence and inequality*' (2019, 202), and '*are morally compromised and most definitely attached – often without their conscious knowledge and in the absence of evil intent – to consequential political and economic dynamics*' (2019, 33) such that the violence could often not have taken place without their involvement.

One illustrative example that Rothberg gives is of the person responsible for coordinating the trains that led millions to the death camps during the Nazi holocaust. Rothberg notes that while the train controller may not have known that he was coordinating the transportation of millions of Nazi victims to death camps, without their involvement the atrocities would not have taken place in the way that they did. A second illustration is of an American, Jewish acquaintance who suggested that as they were themselves a victim of the legacy of the holocaust, they felt no responsibility in the USA for the legacies of slavery and contemporary racial injustice. Rothberg, drawing on the implicated subject, reflected on the way that his friend, as a white person in the USA, has benefitted materially and structurally from the legacies of slavery and ongoing racism. For Rothberg, recognising implication and reflecting on it, is not a blame game, but a way of both addressing responsibility and facilitating solidarity:

> it both draws attention to responsibilities for violence and injustice greater than most of us want to embrace and shifts questions of accountability from a discourse of guilt to a less legally and emotionally charged terrain of historical and political responsibility (2019, 20).

In this sense, Rothberg suggests that the concept of the 'implicated subject' can both expand understanding of networks of responsibility for injustices and empower action through the recognition of

political responsibility, rather than induce guilt, which often leads to disempowerment and passivity. Clearly, not all 'subjects' are equally 'implicated' and types of implication are varied. In nuancing the concept, he talks of the difference between diachronic and synchronic implicated subjects, with the former reflecting implications in the present of injustices in the past, and the latter on implicated subjects' relationships to present atrocities and injustices. He similarly talks of genealogical 'implicated subjects' where an individual is linked directly historically to some injustice, versus structurally 'implicated subjects' where a person is 'implicated' by virtue of being an indirect beneficiary of historic injustices. Additionally, he recognises the way subjects are implicated in complex ways in multiple and often competing historical and contemporary injustices which opens up broader issues for the possibility of intersectional solidarity and shared responsibility and understanding. For sure, the concept of the 'implicated subject' moves away from legalistic definitions of the perpetrators of violence and instead opens up a pathway for reflecting on how our silence, acquiescence, complicity, and embeddedness in networks of power and privilege might contribute to, and benefit from, processes of violence. It also allows us to reflect on the way institutions, including fields of research and practice, might connect to these systems of oppression in complex and often unintended ways. Ultimately, it also seeks to find a pathway whereby 'political and social responsibility' leads to collective action to redress injustices and move the struggle for social justice forward.

Education in emergencies and the implicated subject

Having laid out some reflections on the 'implicated subject', we now move on to reflecting on EiE, as a field of research and practice, and the different ways that we as a research and practice community have become 'implicated' in violent conflict and injustices in a range of diverse ways. While any academic discipline, or sub-discipline in this case, is a product of individual activities, it is also more than the sum of these individuals and builds on knowledges, traditions, histories, structures that link past to present. As Mclennan noted, whilst reflecting on the relationship between sociology, sociologists and colonialism:

> while there may be no transparent relationship between personal and systemic effects and perspectives, the links between these two dimensions (agentive and systemic) can never be severed entirely, because they are co-constitutive of the phenomenon (McLennan 2014, 453).

In an interview, Rothberg reflects on the relationship between individuals and systems in relation to the implicated subject:

> My premise is that we have not had an adequate vocabulary for describing the indirect, structural, and collective forms of agency that enable and propagate violence and exploitation but that can't be described as forms of perpetration. Implicated subjects are those subjects who play crucial, but indirect roles in systems of domination and histories of harm. They are also subjects who inherit and benefit from such systems and histories: they are aligned with power and privilege, without occupying their control centers. Etymologically speaking, to be implicated is to be 'folded into' structures and histories. In other words, implicated subjects do not originate or direct regimes of power, but they inhabit them and participate in upholding them (Knittel and Forchieri 2020, 7).

In his Presidential address to the British Association of International and Comparative Education (BAICE) in 2014, Professor Roger Dale explored the 'Conjunctions of power and comparative education' and argued for the need to analyse the knowledge production processes within Comparative Education in order to understand how it is shaped by power in different ways. As Dale noted, his

> starting point is that the complexity and significance of the relationships between fields of study as distinct and collective academic endeavours, with that which they seek to explore, comment on, understand and explain, are relatively rarely addressed. Exponents of such fields often seem to proceed on the assumption that they are purely driven by the sets of methods, theories, concepts, approaches and so on that have been developed in the name of CE (Dale 2015, 342).

At the heart of Dale's reflections is that research and practice in, for example, the 'Education in Emergencies' community is closely linked to its focus, shaped by the practices and interests of the actors and players involved, and the power relations therein. Furthermore, our task as critical scholars and practitioners is to explore how this economic, political and social context within which we research, and the actors that fund us, shape what we ask and what we do. These broader factors can be understood as the conditions for the production of knowledge and practice and shape our involvement as 'implicated subjects'.

As written elsewhere (Novelli and Lopes Cardozo 2008, 2018; Novelli et al. 2014), the field of 'education in emergencies', and research therein, is closely tied both to policy and practice and the product of particular historical and socio-political conjunctures and power relations. In this section we want to trace out roughly some of the chronology of its expansion as a field and its relationships to geopolitical issues and events. Whilst EiE has its roots in refugee education, peace education and comparative education that date back to the Post WWII era – it really emerges as a sub-field of Comparative and International Education in the late 1990s run up to the 2000 Dakar 'Education for All' – follow up Conference. It was in this period that the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE) was conceived of to coordinate inter-agency work in this field[4], and it was in Dakar that there was a recognition that more than 50% of out of school children lived in conflict affected contexts. This realisation implied that if the global commitments to Education For All, made by the international community in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, were to be achieved, then the particularities of the conflict/education relationship needed to be better understood and acted upon. From this watershed moment flowed resources, and the development of expertise – most evident in the production of INEE 'Toolkits' and the 'Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies' (see Lerch 2017; Winthrop and Matsui 2013).

This was also a Post-Cold War period when 'humanitarian intervention' in the internal affairs of nation states was entering UN lexicon, and development actors were acting not just on the borders of conflict zones, but in their midst – which placed new demands on humanitarian actors, including education specialists (Duffield 2001). It also began to open up complex dilemmas and debates around humanitarian neutrality, the political role of the United Nations, and the uneven morality of Western-led interventions: the 'international' community intervened in some countries and contexts, but turned a blind eye to many others – evidencing what several authors call 'worthy and unworthy victims' (e.g., Butler 2016; Chomsky and Herman 1995).

The second major catalyst for EiE was 9/11 and the ensuing 'War on Terror'. For a range of reasons, education post-9/11 occupied a privileged position in the explanatory framings for those at the helm of a Western military/societal mission to use 9/11 to radically alter the balance of power in both Asia and the Middle East. Education was seen as an important catalyst for radicalisation – with wildly exaggerated claims that radical madrassas in Pakistan and Afghanistan were responsible for nurturing a generation of children socialised into hating the West (see Novelli 2017; 2010). In post-invasion Afghanistan, education was similarly used as a justification for intervention – with Western concern for girl's education becoming a mobilising factor (Russo 2006; Shepherd 2006; Stabile and Kumar 2005). This polarisation between Western/Secular/Inclusive education and Islamic/Religious/Gendered education remains a key cleavage, and a driver of policy, research and practice, and led to a range of educational interventions initially in Pakistan and Afghanistan and later in Iraq and other Muslim majority countries, driven by 'war on terror' imperatives – including using education as part of the military strategy of counterinsurgency aimed at 'winning hearts and minds', 'removing the fish from the water' and recruiting sympathetic allies in protracted conflicts (Gilbert 2015; Novelli 2013).

Linked to this increased polarisation, was a rise of attacks on 'secular' educational institutions and students by radical Islamic groups – from the infamous attack on Malala Youafzai to the equally brutal attacks on Universities in Kenya, Northern Nigeria and other places (c.f GCPEA 2014; 2018; Human Rights Watch 2006). After terrorist bombings in Madrid, London and elsewhere – and the emergence of the concept of the 'home-grown terrorist', the field of EiE also expanded beyond its

previous focus on 'developing contexts' to a growing interest in using education and education systems as 'sites' for 'deradicalization' and for the identification of potential radicalisation amongst young people and adolescents, most notably the PREVENT programme in the UK (Novelli 2017; UNESCO 2017). Thirdly, the exodus of Refugees from Syria and elsewhere – particularly towards Europe, has also led to a rising interest in 'refugee education' and huge amounts of resources emerging from Western governments towards policy, practice and research in these areas – aimed at keeping as many refugees in neighbouring countries and deterring their attempts to come to Europe (Dogachan 2020; Ostrand 2015). All of the above political drivers have massively influenced the flow of resources towards both practice and research in the area of EiE, dominated as it is by the decisions of several key international actors and agencies that skewed and directed the field in very particular ways – illuminating some aspects of the education/conflict puzzle – but obscuring much else as well.

Intellectually, the field was initially influenced by 'refugee education', which had accumulated inside UN organisations since the 1950s. It was also influenced by the 1996 Machel report on 'the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children'. In much of this initial thinking, education and its communities were often seen as victims of war and violence, with evidence of schools destroyed, children recruited, civilians targeted, funding diverted. In 2000 a report by Bush and Saltarelli (2000) reframed that discussion by reflecting on the 'two faces of education' in conflict, and began an ongoing process of exploring how while education and its systems were often a victim and casualty of armed conflict, they could also be a contributory factor. From exclusionary education systems that led to dropouts that entered armed groups, to discriminatory practices, indoctrination, violence and brutality – education systems were playing an important role in creating the conditions under which conflict was fuelled and perpetuated. From uneven financing, discriminatory textbooks, violent disciplinary practices, sexual abuse, bullying, racism, sexism and religious bigotry – institutions of learning in many parts of the world were contributing to the conditions for violent conflict.

In contrast, to the negative faces of education, there was also a burgeoning literature that emerged to start to unpack the positive role of education – to build peace, bring communities together, promote understanding, act inclusively, distribute resources to marginalised communities, etc. Out of that journey – emerged a research culture, working closely with practitioners, that really sought to offer practical, policy relevant solutions to address these challenges (see Burde et al. 2017), such as producing 'how to' Toolkits, led by INEE.

There was also a parallel debate going on, waged by both researchers and practitioners, to make the case for taking the education/conflict relationship seriously. In an era of neoliberalism, where the economics of education was dominant, it was necessary to make the case of why education matters in situations of conflict and crisis, and move beyond human capital framings that saw economic growth as the solution to all societal ills. '*Last in line, last in school* (Save the Children 2007) and later, the 'Education Cannot Wait' campaign and fund, made the case that education in many conflict-affected contexts was often underfunded, under-prioritised, and sacrificed to other sectors and objectives. As a result, both the volume of funding and content began to be raised, alongside strategy and policy development.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the geography of institutional power in this process, much research is closely allied to Western interests and priorities – and there is a notable absence of research that critiques the critical role of key international actors in contributing to the education/conflict crisis in the respective contexts (Novelli et al. 2014). Research generally begins at the borders of conflict affected context – with little recognition of the West's role in the production and reproduction of conflict in many of the places where research takes place. In combination, these factors, at different times and in different ways, have produced a research and policy field that is highly conditioned by a very particular and myopic understanding of problems and solutions – that leads to an avoidance of the complexity, the inequality, and the inherent (though rarely addressed) neo-colonialism of the field (Novelli et al. 2014; Novelli and Lopes Cardozo 2008).

Returning to the idea of the implicated subject, in such a practice and policy-focussed field, dominated by a small number of funders, and working with and through large Western dominated agencies, it is perhaps of little surprise that researchers and practitioners working in the field become 'implicated subjects' in policies and politics that constrain their agency.

Fast forward to 2022, and while much of that critique still holds, there has been a flourishing of critiques of distinct dimensions of the field and new critical directions in research focus that have picked up on some of these issues and taken them forward: see for example Shuayb and Brun (2021) (agendas/refugees); Pherali (2021) (peacebuilding); Abu Moghli (2020) (human rights); Abu Moghli and Kadiwal (2021) (Decolonisation); Rui da Silva and Oliveira (2021) (Africa and education policy); Higgins and Novelli (2020) (peace education), Paulson (2017) (historical memory) to name just a few. These more critical voices have joined a broader debate both within International Education and Development and the broader International Development scape (both research and practice), that is responding to rising concern about the effectiveness, morals and ethics of the field of international development: from the predatory sexual behaviour of some aid workers – and the subsequent cover-up by major institutions that ensued; to issues around the 'white gaze' of the field, 'white saviour' complexes, and growing calls for decolonising our ethnocentric and westo-centric practices and approaches (c.f Sriprakash, Tikly, and Walker 2020).

All of the above point towards the complex ways that the field of 'Education in Emergencies' – and more precisely its researchers and practitioners might be understood as 'implicated subjects' both diachronically and synchronically in systems of violence and oppression, but also the emerging seeds of political responsibility and agency that seeks to push back against this complicity. In the next two sections we explore these two dimensions of the 'implicated subject' separately, whilst recognising their entanglements, before synthesising their implications in the conclusion.

The imperial entanglements of international development (and education): diachronic implicated subjects

Back in 2005, Uma Khotari led some important research exploring ongoing relationships between colonialism and development (c.f Kothari 2005a; 2005b; 2006). In this, she noted that when development studies is taught it often begins in the aftermath of Wold War II, with then US President Truman's famous Point 4 (1947), where he extolled the US's new role as leader of the 'free world' and its distinction between the 'imperialism' of old (France, UK etc.), and the US's new 'fair dealing' leadership that would support 'development'. Khotari, instead argues that we should see 'development' as being born not at the end of WWII but in the midst of anti-colonial struggles in the 1930s as the imperial 'carrot', deployed to reinforce the imperial 'stick' (Kothari 2005a; 2005b; 2006).

Understanding 'development' in this way both forces us to reach back into the colonial past in order to understand our imperial present, and also to reflect on the continuities between colonialism and international development as modes of imperial control. As dependency theorists have long pointed out, the transition from colonialism to national independence was often a transition from formal 'political imperialism' to 'economic imperialism'. For Nkrumah (1965, ix):

> The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and its political policy is directed from outside.

Furthermore, many also argued that the chains that bound these processes together in post-independence are even more difficult to break, as the mechanisms, strategies and actors that exert control on ex-colonial states are less visible to the eye, and therefore potentially harder to remove (Ghosh 2001). Khotari, further notes that the often binary ways we understand 'colonialism' as a 'military' project and therefore 'bad' and international development as 'humanitarian' and at worst benign, is fatally flawed.

If we accept Khotari's reflections on the need to both explore and analyse continuities between colonialism and development, then International and Comparative Education is an interesting site of inquiry. In the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests, Unterhalter and Oketch (2020), in a widely read blog, urged for such a reflection within the Institute of Education (IOE), one of the UK's foremost education institutes and prominent in the field of both EiE and International Education and Development.

> The early links with colonialism at the Institution of Education (IoE) are clear … IoE was initially founded in 1902 as the London Day Training College for teachers. In 1927 the Director accepted appointment to a body with clear links with a number of colonial projects, the British Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa. As part of the work for this committee, he was invited by the Colonial Office to establish a course at IoE to prepare students for work as education officers in Africa, and to support missionaries preparing to work in teacher training colleges in what was then Tanganyika (now Tanzania). A Colonial Department was established at IoE in 1934, with a lecturer appointed to specialize in the comparative education of 'primitive peoples'. Thus institutionally the teaching and research of IoE were clearly bound in with colonial education projects. In the 1950s there was a change of name, when the Colonial Department at IoE became the Department of Education in Tropical Areas (ETA). Only in 1973 was some distance from colonialism signalled in a new name, the Department of Education in Developing Countries (EDC). In 1995 this became the Department of education and International Development (EID).

Reaching back into the period of colonialism, we can see how research on education, and educational practice, in colonial contexts was tied up with both missionary logics of morality and western/white/christian superiority, and modernist beliefs in developed/underdeveloped, primitive/advanced societies and peoples. Many researchers and practitioners no doubt felt that that they were 'helping' local populations, and would separate themselves out from the military power and economic processes that linked together the colonial project. Similarly, today the field of international development and education appears equally entangled, imbued with beliefs of 'doing good' and 'helping', yet as the post-development theorists (e.g., Escobar 1995; Sachs 1992) reminded us, that 'help' often had terrible consequences, in education and beyond: from epistemicide to linguistic imperialism. While the critique of the couplet of the bible and the gun is well established, there are many similarities between that and current research, NGO, military relationships: directly and indirectly. Similarly, development as project continues to be something we in the North do to people in the South, and in engaging in that process (in the Global North) we benefit from the legacies of colonial conquest and domination and its cognitive as well as material base.

A recent UK parliamentary committee report from the International Development Committee (IDC 2022) explored these issues across the UK development sector and made a number of points that resonate strongly with the research field of International and Comparative Education, and EiE specifically. They found strong continuity between the colonial period and development, including ongoing power imbalances between North and South, racial hierarchies that manifest themselves in a lack of diversity in development institutions, unequal pay structures between northern and southern based staff members; unequal partnership between institutions in the global north and south, and ongoing epistemic privileging of north based ideas and innovations to the detriment of those in the south.

Perhaps at this point we should also note that there have always been critics of both colonialism and development, both in the past and the present, and the balance of social forces and social critiques rose and subsided over these periods as popular resistance and protest developed. Similarly, as researchers we need to reflect on the role that we play, and where we fit into this picture. Mahmoud Mamdani, at the 2019 annual Development Studies Association conference, noted that while '*Development studies started as a critique of empire*' it has '*now become the language of empire … part of its claim, part of its justification*' (Mamdani 2019).

Mamdani's reflections force us to reflect on the ways our own field of research has at times become a cheerleader for empire, at times a critic, and the competing processes and impulses that drive this. Development studies more generally, as a very applied field, is often dependent

for research funds on international development organisations and western donor states that have very specific agendas, and EiE is no different. Similarly, the University sector in the global north has become increasingly commercialised and staff required to earn external research money for career progression. These processes often lead to the pre-determination of research issues, geographical focus and questions, and to more compliant researchers. As a result, the commitment by major development actors to 'Evidence-Based Policy' has too often become the byword for 'Policy-Based Evidence', which is often delivered by researchers way too eager to please their funders (Boden and Epstein 2006).

In many ways the EiE research and practice community is an extreme case of all of the above, as it is a field particularly financially and politically dependent on a very narrow set of funders and agencies (Novelli and Lopes Cardozo 2018). Some of these challenges were noted in response to the Black Lives Matter protests by the INEE, which has been at the centre of the field's development since 2010:

> We recognize and acknowledge that we are a part of a global humanitarian system that, while holding good intentions for the world's most vulnerable, is implicitly colonial in nature. Because of this, the INEE Secretariat acknowledges the ways in which we reinforce and perpetuate white supremacy culture and institutional racism through some of our structures and actions. It is essential that we face these flaws in our systems – and ourselves – head-on and take steps, to dismantle these structures and take more inclusive and racially responsive actions to advance our mission of ensuring the right to a quality, safe, and relevant education for all who live in emergency and crisis contexts. (INEE 2020)

As a result, INEE have committed to a 10 point plan[5] and have also commissioned an external organisation to develop a decolonisation strategy for INEE. It is too early to say whether these important steps forward will produce the transformatory changes necessary, but there is clearly now a welcome recognition of the way our researchers and practitioners are 'implicated' in systems of oppression and violence.

Afghanistan as case: the synchronic implicated subject

Building on the above diachronic reflections we now want to drill down into one case – that of Afghanistan, to illustrate the way education actors were 'implicated subjects' in the overthrow, invasion and occupation of Afghanistan. In doing so, we seek to shed some light on how this happens through an analysis of a synchronic example of the implicated subject. With over two decades since 9/11 and the subsequent invasion of Afghanistan, and more than a year since the US-led Western withdrawal, this is a timely moment to reflect.

From the initial occupation, to the withdrawal two decades later, education and gender equity therein, has been used as an important mechanism for justifying intervention by Western led forces. As the influential US magazine TIME noted:

> The plight of Afghan women and girls occupied much of the Western rhetoric around the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, accompanying the stated aim of eradicating al-Qaeda for its role in staging the 9/11 attacks. Educating Afghan girls, a rallying cry of former first lady Laura Bush, in particular, became a U.S. focal point in Afghanistan. Soon after the U.S. invasion, tens of thousands of schoolgirls garbed in black uniforms and flowing white headscarves began attending schools across the country, symbols of tangible progress that are still touted by the international community today (Alizada and Ferris-Rotman 2021).

In the aftermath of the initial invasion, the then first lady Laura Bush stated:

> Fighting brutality against women and children is not the expression of a specific culture; it is the acceptance of our common humanity – a commitment shared by people of good will on every continent. Because of our recent military gains in much of Afghanistan, women are no longer imprisoned in their homes. They can listen to music and teach their daughters without fear of punishment. Yet the terrorists who helped rule that country now plot and plan in many countries. And they must be stopped. The fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women (Bush 2001).

As a result of these discursive justifications, the 'Education in Emergencies' community, by virtue of operating in Afghanistan on promoting education and schooling, with and often alongside occupying forces, became implicated in this process. Education and Social Services provision and policy, and issues of gender equity contributed to the idea that the US led NATO forces were primarily there to bring modernity, equality, gender equity etc. Whilst parallels with the colonial era can sometimes be unhelpful, there is something uncannily familiar about the similarities between missionaries and their armies of Empire and the role played by some NGOs, Aid agencies in their relationships with occupying NATO forces, and while this time not 'saving souls' they were often constructed as saving schools, women, children and the general population.

While many noted that the catalyst for the invasion of Afghanistan had little to do with female emancipation and girls education, and much more with punishing the Taliban and de facto the whole nation, for harbouring Osama Bin laden after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, education and gender equity were powerful justifications (Afzal and Kennedy-Pipe 2022; Stabile and Kumar 2005). Furthermore, by politicising gender and education, the Education in Emergencies community, became seen as part of that broader NGO 'combat team' noted by Colin Powell, then US Secretary of State, in the aftermath of 9/11:

> As I speak, just as surely as our diplomats and military, American NGOs are out there serving and sacrificing on the front lines of freedom … . I am serious about making sure we have the best relationship with the NGOs who are such a force multiplier for us, such an important part of our combat team. [We are] all committed to the same, singular purpose to help every man and woman in the world who is in need, who is hungry, who is without hope, to help every one of them fill a belly, get a roof over their heads, educate their children, have hope (Powell 2001).

While the rhetoric of 'social' justification for occupation continued throughout the long two decades of occupation, the US and its allies' priorities are laid bare in the balance of resources allocated to diverse mission activities. As the economist Jeffrey Sachs (2021) recently noted:

> According to a recent report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, the US invested roughly $946 billion between 2001 and 2021. Yet almost $1 trillion in outlays won the US few hearts and minds. Here's why. Of that $946 billion, fully $816 billion, or 86%, went to military outlays for US troops. And the Afghan people saw little of the remaining $130 billion, with $83 billion going to the Afghan Security Forces. Another $10 billion or so was spent on drug interdiction operations, while $15 billion was for US agencies operating in Afghanistan. That left a meager $21 billion in 'economic support' funding. Yet even much of this spending left little if any development on the ground, because the programs actually 'support counterterrorism; bolster national economies; and assist in the development of effective, accessible, and independent legal systems' (Sachs 2021).

For those who cared to look, the evidence of the past willingness of the US and its allies to use education as a political/ideological tool, regardless of the human cost, was there from the beginning. Back in the 1980s, when the Soviet Union was occupying Afghanistan, and Cold War doctrine enshrined a 'my enemy's enemy is my friend' approach to international relations, the United States military armed, trained and funded jihadists from around the world, through Pakistan, to fight against the Soviets. While a small part of the overall approach, education researchers and practitioners were 'implicated subjects' in that process. A famous example was a team recruited by the University of Nebraska, and funded by USAID, that developed and produced textbooks in the 1980s for refugees in camps at the border with Pakistan, where maths lessons were taught asking questions such as:

> The speed of a Kalashnikov bullet is 800 meters per second. If a Russian is at a distance of 3200 meters from a mujahid, and that mujahid aims at the Russian's head, calculate how many seconds it will take for the bullet to strike the Russian in the forehead (Davis, 2002, 92, 93).

This war curriculum was aimed at providing young Afghan recruits to fill the ranks of the US funded and supported Mujahideen. Those Afghan recruits and their international allies would eventually defeat the Russian occupation and move on to other things.

Moving forward to the 2002 invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, education proved to be a central justification. Firstly, it was mobilised to allege that religious 'madrasas' were the breeding grounds for 'Islamic terrorists', and later it was the support for 'girls education' (Chishti 2010; Khalid 2011). As occupations in both Afghanistan and Iraq began to falter militarily, a switch to a counterinsurgency strategy brought 'hearts and minds' into the military strategy and education was again a key pillar (Dyvik 2014; Novelli 2010). This led to the creation of Provincial Reconstruction Teams, where military and development workers worked together building schools and hospitals by day and hunting militants by night.[6] But just as in the counterinsurgency war in Algeria, which inspired the US approach under the leadership of General Petraeus, the balance between hearts and minds and violent force, was often tilted heavily towards the latter. This militarisation of aid more generally, and to education specifically, has been well documented, but too rapidly dismissed as troublemaking and divisive by education actors and international donors (McCormack and Gilbert 2022; Novelli 2011).

Thinking of Afghanistan and the two decades of occupation, could that have been sustained without the discursive justification that the West was there to help girls get access to education? Could it have been sustained without reference to the West's mission to support progressive, secular education in resistance to the theological dogma of the Taliban? Maybe it could have, but it would definitely have looked different, less acceptable and less legitimate. In that sense, the education sector, its actors and supporters, were integral parts of the system of violence and oppression that was the US led occupation of Afghanistan, and just as we claim responsibility for increases in attendance and gender parity in education, we also have to recognise our implication in the corresponding death toll and the widespread human rights violations.

Returning to the 'implicated subject', we can see how EiE actors contributed to the discursive legitimation of the US led occupation, failed to challenge the militarisation of the education work, allowed co-option, weaponised education and provided photo opportunities to sustain a military mission that was both flawed and failing. While much may well have been unintentional, our field must carry a degree of political and social responsibility for the systems of violence and oppression that were enacted. That's a conversation that at the very least we need to begin.

Towards recognition, responsibility and solidarity

Central to the challenge of critique in this field, and in many other areas of international development, is that it can't remain only at the level of theory – it needs also an engagement with practice. The issues and the conditions under which education takes place in so many war and conflict-torn contexts is too pressing to leave at the level of theoretical abstraction or for that matter in the archives of paywalled journals. So, our challenge is to develop an approach to research and practice that is informed by the above critique but with feet firmly planted on the ground. Our own interpretation is that currently, researchers in the field of Education in Emergencies tend to operate as organic intellectuals, in a Gramscian sense, of a liberal global development elite, largely well-meaning but often unprepared or unwilling to go beyond palliative treatment of issues that require radical incursions (Gramsci 2005). We work within a paradigm, structured by both the material power of agencies and funders, but also a cognitive framing that sees the South as 'other' and in need of intervention, and the West as largely benevolent – albeit prone to mistakes, short termism and flaws in judgment. We circulate in global meet ups and resent any challenges to orthodox approaches – seeing critique as an obstacle to saving lives, helping children, and doing what we can in an imperfect world. Critics are constructed at best as uncaring and often as a threat. While there is some merit in the argument for pragmatic responses, it has often led to unwitting and uncritical collaboration with agents of empire and national oppression.

Returning to Rothberg's concept of the 'implicated subject', central to its utility is not to induce guilt, but instead to promote political responsibility and political action. It is a conceptual tool for us to draw upon and to apply in order to reflect on how we become implicated in systems of violence

and oppression, the differing levels of responsibility that we might assign, and the processes through which, in different spheres and social domains, actors get caught up in processes of violence, often without even realising their own involvement. If we can better understand those processes, perhaps we can chart a different path away from violence and complicity and towards solidarity and social justice.

While this paper has presented some quite damning reflections on a field that we have engaged in and with for nearly two decades, and that we are implicated in, this is not a resignation letter. It is instead a call for action and self-critical reflection. A call for more holistic analysis of education issues in conflict affected contexts that understand and explore the political economy of education in all its complexity; and the necessity of teaching that to a new generation of researchers and practitioners so they become subjects rather than objects of others' agendas. A call for reflections on the way our field is 'implicated' in systems of violence and oppression, by design or by default, and to work together to imagine and construct different practices, different relationships and different futures. A call for the construction of new relationships with grassroots movements in conflict affected contexts and bottom-up research that starts from the questions and the challenges that oppressed communities face, rather than the needs of powerful aid agencies and institutions (c.f https://knowledge4struggle.org/). Finally, it is also a call for resistance to being adjuncts to empire and instead to become 'implicated subjects' in transformations that promote peace with social justice.

Notes

1. Defined as those practitioners, researchers and agencies involved in supporting and providing 'quality learning opportunities' for all ages in situations of crisis, including early childhood development, primary, secondary, non-formal, technical, vocational, higher and adult education. Education in emergencies provides physical, psychosocial, and cognitive protection that can sustain and save lives. Common situations of crisis in which education in emergencies is essential include conflicts, situations of violence, forced displacement, disasters, and public health emergencies. Education in emergencies is a wider concept than 'emergency education response' which is an essential part of it. (https://inee.org/education-in-emergencies#event-universal-declaration-of-human-rights)
2. https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2021/Costs%20of%20War_Direct%20War%20Deaths_9.1.21.pdf. By stating this we are not suggesting that the US-led forces are responsible unitarily for all of these deaths, but it is without doubt implicated in them.
3. According to the SIGAR (2021, 145) report 'Since 2002, USAID has disbursed more than $1.2 billion for education programs, as of January 4, 2021' out of a total US budget of $946 billion.
4. From the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE) website: https://inee.org/about-inee
    'INEE was conceptualized in 2000, during the Strategy Session on Education in Emergencies held at the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar. As a result, UNESCO, UNICEF, and UNHCR, committed to advancing Strategy Five of the Dakar Framework, convened the first Global Consultation on Education in Emergencies (Geneva, November 8–10, 2000) with representatives from WFP, UNDP, the World Bank, bilateral donors, and more than 20 non-governmental organizations engaged in education in emergencies programming. INEE was launched during that consultation in order to build upon and consolidate existing networks and efforts'.
5. The INEE Secretariat commits to: 1. Work with INEE's hosting agencies to affect change in hiring practices with the aim of changing the composition of the INEE Secretariat to reflect the diverse contexts we support and the membership we serve. 2. Develop modalities for diverse representation on INEE's governing body, the INEE Steering Group, by changing selection criteria to ensure effective representation that reflects the diversity of our membership. 3. Redefine, expand, and improve diversified representation in existing and future INEE network spaces, in both purpose and participation. 4. Support the primacy of the voices of the affected populations in all our work and, specifically, support the localisation agenda to redress power imbalances by empowering national education actors and affected populations. 5. Make our events open and accessible by expanding our invitation practices, ensuring events are multilingual or that parallel events are available in several languages, and including opportunities for participants to speak. 6. Address our own inherent bias and build our capacity to lead in the EiE sector by participating in anti-racism and equity training. 7. Engage with our host agencies' and members' emerging anti-racism forums. 8. Review existing and developing all new INEE resources with an anti-racism and racial equity lens. 9. Support our members to address anti-racism

and equity in EiE programming. 10. Report to the INEE membership regularly (annually at a minimum) on the progress we make on our commitments.

6. 'Hunting militants by night' is not a metaphor, as recent court cases in Australia and BBC Panorama research have revealed that NATO special forces soldiers were routinely catching and executing suspected militant. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-62083196

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