

## **The Role of Geographical Imagination and Geopolitical Representation in Dividing Space/Place into "our" and "their"**

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### **Abstract**

Human life is tied with space through spatial emotions and the sense of place. Although existence of spatial emotions plays a vital role in the creation of space and in some ways reflects the presence, tale, culture, and feeling in the place and space and in this way assists man in there, in some situations this issue can lead to some challenges which are rooted in discriminative approaches that divide humanity into "us" against "others". In the critical human geography and critical geopolitics, scholars mentioned numerous factors which are influential in this dividing. One of the main factors which plays a significant role in this process is "geographical imagination" which obtains semi-logical reasons for a group of individuals and some states and powers to exclude other social, political, and ethical groups from "us". This subject can influence people and encourage them to ascribe wrong facts to individuals who are categorized as "others" and misattribute their spaces and places as dangerous locations. This spatial approach, consequently can result in labeling some spaces as "spaces of fear" and through this generates a wide range of social, economical, political and spatial problems and restrictions for individuals who are considered as "others or them".

**Keywords:** Imagination, Representation, Spatial Emotions, Spaces of Fear.

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### **1.Introduction**

As Murphy (2006) mentioned, we are living in the time of "globalized fears" which are identified by issues like poverty, migration, climate change, risks of mass destruction and social injustice and geographical inequality. This means that "fear" has become a critical concept in geopolitical and geographical debates as "security". In other words, fear and security have a dialectical relation. As Buzan (1991:7) mentioned, security is a "competitive concept" due to its influence on others' circumstances. Today, "security's function in the non-military issues such as environment and economy" (Ackleson,2005:168) has increased. In this situation, as some approaches focused on the security, there are scholars, such as Pain, Panelli, Kindon, and Little (2010) who emphasized on the fear that is negative and represents the dark side of security, because as security, fear can produce reasons for measures that are threatening for human rights, justice and even life. When the concept of security is debated, indirectly, two crucial concepts are considered: insecurity and fear. But, are both sides of the debate have the same function? In spite of their interdependence, their geopolitical representations are not similar in this issue and enhance duality in the space and place. These sorts of representations occur intentionally and unintentionally by both individuals and in power institutions, discourses and states for various purposes. Analysis of this issue needs critical geopolitics' approaches that rely on challenging viewpoints of realism school in International Relation Theory and traditional geography (Hyndman,2004). Emphasis on critical analysis does not mean that the analyses of traditional geography are not useful, rather it tries to compensate their weaknesses. For instance, while Richard Hartshorne (1939): Quoted in; Barnes and Farish,2006:812) had emphasized on the effectiveness of "systemic approaches in the geography" and advised that geographical issues must be assessed "chronologically", critical attitudes indicated that many problems in the realm of geography cannot be analyzed and solved by classical geography and traditional geopolitics (Hyndman,2004). Therefore, if classical geopolitics is known as a "realistic study of state and statecraft", critical geopolitics can be considered as a viewpoint for "studying geographical imaginations and cultures which are the basis of states and their functions" (Harker,2011:306). In the context of "security", "fear" and "us versus others", (Ahmady Pour and Rashidi,2018) we have to concentrate

on concepts such as "peace", "violence" and "war" whose function have been challenged for the system of statecraft by "critical geopolitics" (Dolby,1991 quoted in: Hyndman,2004:310). Critical geopolitics can help us to understand what is going on in the places and spaces that have become the field of contrast between self-defined "us" and groups and individuals which are imagined as "others" and "narrate the story" and spatial emotions of whom "resist" against these inequalities (Routledge,1996:528 Quoted in Ibid:311). Resistance in geography was accompanied by the concept of spatial emotions. Emotions play a crucial role in debates of geography (Davidson and Milligan,2007; Pile,2010), geopolitics (Pain et al,2010; Laketa,2016), global politics, social and geographical movements (Ahmady Pour, Rashidi and Karimi,2016) and international relations (Crawford,2000). Emotions such as love and hatred are tied with space and place and their influence can be recognized within the discussions about "nationalism", "insecurity" (Ibid,116), "cities" and "conflicts" (Laketa,2016) and "sensing place" (Davidson and Milligan,2007).

In spite of emotions' importance and function in spatial politics, events, attitudes and process, it seems that their influence has not been discussed enough, "specially the sense of fear that can be dangerous" (Pain et al,2010:973). As many scholars mentioned, spatial emotions can be identified in all aspects of politics, culture and geography (e.g. Crawford,2000; Davidson and Milligan,2007; Pain et al,2010; and Laketa,2016) and play a critical role in the "geographical imaginations" (Gregory,1994; Ahmady Pour and Rashidi,2020) and "geopolitical representations" (Agnew,2003 and Dempsey and McDowell,2019), both of which have been using for "reterritorialization" and "deterritorialization" (Deleuze and Guattari,1980 quoted in: Chapman,2013:68). These processes alongside the concept of "us" versus "others" created a world that divided into "our" and "their" in various scales; from local and urban scales to national and global scale. In a cyclic process, this issue can intensify fear in and of spaces, emotional distance between spaces and even people, and spatial fear (Ahmadypour and Rashidi,2018). Therefore, in the current study we examined the role of imaginations and representations in space and assessed the deepening gap between "us" and "others".

In this essay, various steps were taken to present the findings about the role of geographical imaginations in the creation of spaces of fear, First, we

discussed about the spaces of fear from the geopolitical perspective. In the next step, our research focused on reasons which are behind spatial emotions and function of feeling of space in the creation of "us" versus "others". The third step, conflates these findings for assessing the crucial role of geopolitical representations and geographical imagination in generation of those concepts and discusses why identifying this issue is important and what are the consequences of imaginations and creation of spaces of fear.

## **2. Methodology**

In this research, discourse analysis was used to explore the concepts of us, others, otherness, spatial emotions and imagination. This method provides an excellent tool for understanding geopolitical construct imaginations of space and place and assists us in extending our approaches toward the creation of "spaces of fear".

## **3. Research Findings and Analysis**

Spaces of fear are created in various scales and are influenced by numerous factors such as economy, race, gender, religion, politics and culture. These spaces are the opposite of spaces of security and via interaction with them create a duality in landscapes. Importance of this duality is due to the reason that without each of them, another concept is meaningless. As Anderson (2010:228) mentioned, existence of spaces of security is interrelated with forms of threat against life. The major consequence of an existing threat is the creation of an increasingly need for spatial control and observation. Because, control and observation help to avoid instabilities which are produced by phenomena that are rooted in the spaces of others by reducing the level of interaction between different spaces. In other words, if a particular space wants security inside its borders, it needs barriers which are impermeable by others and their actions.

Presence of barriers which are impermeable is necessary to prevent the expansion of phenomena which are considered irrelevant by states or authorities. Impermeability of geographical spaces needs establishing a wide range of restrictions that assist in reduction of flows of humans, goods and ideas. Every country uses specific methods for securing geographical spaces via physical and virtual walls. Lockdown of borders and information gates by North Korea, establishing border-walls between US and Mexico borders

by US, monitoring social media contents by China, Russia and Iran, and multi-layered barriers which are implanted by Israeli forces in Occupied Territories are instances that show how states attempt to secure their realms and exert their power. As Karen E. Till (2013:52) noted "in past and present, walls have designed configuration of state power. Implication of power could be interpreted as representational metaphor for ensuring us versus others in the world fulfilled with "globalized fear" (Pain,2009).

This attitude toward the fear, which augments differences between us and others, has a significant effect on public understandings about the world by dividing human society. While some consider this policy as a tool for discrimination, geographical inequality and social injustice, others concentrate on benefits which are produced by that. The nature of concept of security is discriminatory and even could be functioned for dividing. Lipschutz (1995 Quoted in: Ackleson,2005:168) argued that safety without the presence of an "other" that is used for identifying insecurity's circumstances is meaningless. That "other" is produced and understood by discourse. Considerations which are used by society for discriminating human groups as "us" and "others" is called "theory of otherness" by Jean Laplanche (cited in Pardy,2011:51). When a group is alienated as others, they are pictured with images that do not fit the characteristics of a group, a society, or a space that visualizes as us.

With regard to the attitudes of Said (2003) about imagination, Springer (2011:94) discusses that "Space is endowed with an imaginative or figurative value that we can name and feel, acquiring" "emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here". Emphasizing on the presence of us in a geographical space or place could be interpreted as neglecting the presence of others. This means that there is a system of ranking that denies equal rights for others versus us and consequently classifies them and their characteristics as phenomena which belong to alien spaces.

There is a long history of geographical imagination in ancient Greece and Roman Empire where the members of society saw themselves in the centre of a world which was surrounded by another world that is pictured by threats and strange demons (Morley,2000:73). In this framework, borders functioned as barriers which protect the inside from invasions of individuals

from the outside and due to this reason borders were the symbol of difference between our and their spaces that also kept required distance (Ahmadypour and Rashidi,2020). These bolded differences are reflected not only in geographical views, but also in regulations and legal attitudes. For instance, concepts such as local, national, foreigner, resident, citizen, migrant, and refugee in various ways show that to what a person can contribute to the social, political, economic and geographical process. In this context, permissions, facilities, and measures which are allocated to a citizen is different from those provided for a foreigner or a refugee. This issue indicates that "otherness" is a complicated concept that demonstrates how power is distributed in diverse scales. Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt (2012:156) mentioned that "in fact political power and definition of sovereignty are rooted in superiority one to another, a superiority that dominates one side to other side". These privileges assist people who are considered as us to determine about rules, roles and functions in space and evaluation of values of others in comparison with us.

Domination of a particular group or class and their influence on the definition and organization of structures is accompanied by power. This could be a form of "hegemony". As Gramsci (1971:245 Cited in: Sharp,1996:558) noted "hegemony represents an instable balance among [social] classes". Hegemony consists of a wide range of realms such as politics, economics, social and geographical spaces and its existence depends on geopolitical representation and geographical imaginations. Due to this reason, functions of hegemony remind us that imaginations which are produced about space and place could help the dominant power to expand its influence by popular culture.

Popular culture is one of the functional concepts that is used for conceptualization of difference between "us" and "other", expansion of dominance and consequently the establishment of hegemony. In the process of development of hegemony by power institutions popular, culture is important due to linguistic games that help one side to stabilizing its superiority over others by a system of evaluation which depreciates others' assets and values. This process occurs in various scales. At local and national scales, this process strengthens the influence of dominant power, class or social group, and at the global level, it contributes to the maintenance and expansion of western and Euro-centric understanding of

the world.

This understanding is interrelated with the "sense of place". Sense of place defines the quality of individuals' role in a geographical area and associates in utilizing citizenship concept for discrimination between us and others. Consequently, logical reasons, such as social, political and economic, are produced to justify these differences. As Michel de Certeau (1984,36 quoted in Secor 2004:353) mentioned " Citizenship as a "strategy" works to define and lay claim to a bounded space of belonging delimited against an exteriority; "Every strategic rationalization . . . is an effort to delimit one's own place in a world bewitched by the invisible powers of the Other". When an individual uses the sense of place for defining his or her position in the society and announcing his or her rights in the certain place, he or she gets a dual perspective on the relation of personal rights and geographical space. Although it shows that his/her participation in the space and justice request, the emphasis here is that there is a discrimination between he or she and a person who is out of the circle of legal citizenship.

Citizenship, in this context, plays a crucial role in personal and social territorialization. As Anna Secor (2004:353) mentioned "citizenship works not only at the state level to assemble identities and position them variously in relation to discourses of "belonging" and "rights," but also at the scale of everyday, urban life". Being in the place, memories, shared values, spatial experiences and history can relate people to place, but without the existence of citizenship's right there could be challenges because restrictive laws, politics, and measures empower differences within them. Consequently, some percept themselves as "us" and consider another group as "others". This issue causes a paradoxical sense toward place. While some experience security and hope, others find themselves in the situation that discriminates them as "others" and intensifies the sense of "otherness". As a result, the process of representing differences as otherness is accelerated which is considered as one of the main factors in the expansion of spatial emotions such as fear and hope. In this case, Julien Rebotier (2011:105) discussed that "fear is existential. Emotions can be tenuously connected with the material reality. But their concreteness is both material and intangible. They are both passion and action at once. Emotions, and fear in this case, are historically, socially, and politically contingent. As well, they rely on subjectivities and individuals. They cut across the emotional and the

rational". Sense of place can be influential in both the destiny of human and place and social behavior of individuals under citizenship laws. Therefore, emotions must be considered as a crucial factor in local, national and global politics. Crawford (2000:118 quoted in Pain et al,2010:973) believes that in spite of their importance, emotions like "fear and hate" have not been completely assessed and deserve more studies. Spatial emotions are related to the conception of place and how these conceptions are interpreted and measured by various human groups. Thus, sense of place and spatial emotions could be politicized by both individuals and authorities.

Sense of place could be considered as a restricting tool due to its effect on spatial laws and regulations that protect social, political, economic and religious rights of one part of community, and exclude others. Spatial emotions in many aspects are combined with political and social attitudes, consequently, in a place or space traces of politics are illustrated by policies which divide community and phenomena into legal and illegal. Among all emotions, fear plays a vital role here. Not only does sense of fear is about future, but also about historical events and destiny of place and space during the time. In this framework, in the realm of spatial emotions, fear is a reaction to threats which are perceived;

"The differential functioning of fear and hope is well demonstrated in a situation of perceived threat. Fear, an automatic emotion based on past and present affective experiences, is processed both unconsciously and consciously, while hope is an emotion based on the cognitive activity of deliberate thinking accompanied by positive affective components. In view of this different nature and functioning of fear and hope, it is often observed that in stressful situations fear overrules hope, causing distress and misery to both, individuals and groups" (Jarymoxiczi and Bar-Tal,2006:368).

These fears represent themselves in both official and mental borders and intensify discriminations inside society and place. In the interaction of "us" as who are fearing and "others" as who are threatening, hypothesized that borders between self and other clearly identified by physical border of body. In contrast, Pardy (2001:53) argued that while "skin" is considered as non-problematic border of body, "mental and emotional borders between self and other" is hardly debated in academic research. While she continues that there is not any division between self and other or between interior and exterior worlds, actual measures indicate that a meaningful part of human



society has a different perception. This difference shows that in the space and place behaviors with us and others is biased, however, it is true that there is no difference between us and others in nature. Therefore, the debate of otherness and borders became a complicated geographical issue because of the intervention of emotions.

Emotional intervention in geographical process takes place in various methods, but in here we want to focus on representation. Due to the role of representation in the transmission of ideas, depicting events and visualizing messages, it could be considered as a battleground for us versus others. It can help to trace spatial fears, sense of fear and threat, and factors which are influential in the definition of us against others in geographical spaces.

Michel Foucault (cited in Story,2010:24) mentioned that "representation always occurs within the discourse and discourse determines what could be said and what cannot about particular text". Not only, this does not mean we can deny the world's materialistic reality, but also it emphasizes that our world gain meaning in the discourse's framework. In spite of physical and objective characteristics, world's existence depends on subjectivities which are produced by predominant discourses. In addition, although everyday experience helps human, this is the knowledge which is the product of political, social and cultural structures that transforms the surrounding world into an identifiable concept, a concept which is under the influence of act of representation. These structures encourage people to accept images which are products of "geographical imaginations" (Said,2003) as a factual world, while Gregory (1994) believes that those representations created "imaginative geographies" that are not correlated with geographical truths. In this process, a place due to imaginations is replaced by an illusionary place that fits mental images rather than realities. As Deutsche, (1990,133 Quoted in Dixon et al,2008:31) discussed:

"A commanding position on the battleground of representation one that denies the partial and fragmented conditions of vision by claiming to 'perceive' a total truth is an illusionary place whose construction, motivated by wishes, entails hallucinations and hysterical blindness. It is a position constructed in a form of knowledge that produces total unfragmented subjects".

These imaginations could occur at various scales and every place could be the subject of geographical imaginations. The presence of this issue in the

world is to an extent that in the majority of spaces we can recognize traces of geographical imaginations that represent certain places, races, social groups or phenomena in a misleading way. Although this does not mean that all representations are illusive, we should discriminate between those that are fictional and those that are real. Especially, this issue is crucial in the context of visual representations or those that encourage people to geographical imaginations. In this realm, "three central ways of representation in visual communication can be deduced: the image as a mirror of reality, the image as a map of reality and the image as a simulacrum which only seems to reproduce reality but ultimately hides it" (Kukkonen,2011:55). The function of each of them in the understanding of the world is immense, due to their effect on the way of seeing the world and interacting with that. In some cases, these imaginations are associated with the process of division of society and space into "our" and "their" and, consequently, lead to distancing between "us" and "others". As we discussed before, this issue can expand spatial emotions in a negative way and develop a domain of prejudgment effects. Latino migrants, for instance, are cross section of this subject. Because, in various cases they were victims of misrepresentations that portrait them as other in the United States. For instance, in the *Havoc* (20005) film, directed by Barbara Kopple, depicted two girls who belong to upper-class and live in Pacific Palisades and join an adventurous journey inside the Latino neighborhood of Los Angeles. Although they try to experience the life in different parts of space and life-style of other members of the society, Latino people of the *Havoc* show their differences by evil acts such as rape and using drug and criminal behaviors. Therefore, finally, these two girls decide to maintain their distance with people and spaces that are alien.

Movies, by visualizing landscapes, their characteristics, phenomenon and habitants, play a crucial role in providing knowledge about whether places are alien or adjacent and familiar. Therefore, "a cinematic landscape is a very sophisticated and powerful form of representation because of the medium. Movies have helped establish specific landscapes and brought them into national consciousness. Landscape is central to the formation of cinematic space" (Hopkins,1994:49 quoted in Zimmermann,2008:173). Cinematic landscapes influence the mental images of places and spaces and through this create actions that are inappropriate. After displaying City of

God (2002) that graphically depicted violence and drug war in Rio, for instance, tourism tours are launched for visiting poor neighborhoods of this city (Harvey,2012:100). This issue shows that some people are interested in investigating subjects of representations personally and correlating visual world that is depicted in media to the real world. Therefore, experiencing the space is considered as an access way for understanding "us" versus "others". In numerous cases, due to neglecting social, cultural, geographical and economic factors that shape the nature of space, these tours and trips cannot be elucidating. Reasons behind this historical neglecting is rooted in geographical imaginations that are based on definitions of "us" as a symbol of civilization and "them" as groups which need to be civilized, a definition that led to deepening differences between "our" and "their" space (Said, 2003).

Imagination is a crucial part of both local and global politics. Imaginations not only play a role in policy-making process, but also in public's bias about diverse issues. Said (1993:310) used the concept of "international Imaginary" for describing the situation in the world that caused by imaginations. For Said (2003), as he discussed in *Orientalism*, these imaginations that is traced back to age of encountering the West with East and then continued during the "age of geographical explorations" are the basis of western interpretation of world which considered others as negative versions of us. In Micheal J. Shapiro's (1993:310 quoted in Salter,2008:234) notion "International imaginary" is defined as "structural and symbolic framework that gives meaning to, and perpetuates, the configuration of sovereign states and their international relations". Although, this notion covers a major part of the debate, another co-related concept which is called "popular imaginary" (Salter,2008:234) plays an influential role here. Because, popular imaginary is created, circulated and used in the realm of everyday life, and it is tied to multitude's awareness. Salter (ibid) discussed that popular imaginary is too important, due to " non-elite international epistemology and ontology – how the multitude comes to authenticate knowledge about the world and the possibility for values within that world". In the debate of international imaginary, Salter's (2008) mentioned that popular imaginary can help us to understand why multitude's imaginations functioned as a tool for discriminating us from others. Ancient Greeks used to explain ideas and world's phenomenon in a metaphoric way, in which a

large number of natural and humanistic issues are interpreted with allegories. Fear was one of these phenomena that showed itself in various aspects of ancient Greek's life. In the Republic, Plato used metaphors -wolf versus dog- which belongs to nature to discriminate sophists from philosophers, safety from insecurity and finally others from us. As Mendieta (2011:82) mentioned " the metaphor of the sophist as a wolf, and the philosopher as a dog, is not explicitly spatial, although it does not lack its spatiality; after all, the wolf comes from the wild, the woods, and the forest to threaten the order of the city, while the philosopher-dog, watches at the gates, or walls of the city, welcoming the friend, alerting us to the enemy or unknown visitor". This attitude toward maintaining security and preventing insecurity has continued until now. Increasingly growing risks which threaten the normative life, nowadays, somehow is correlated with a sense of danger from individuals, phenomenon and places that are categorized as aliens. Therefore, right wing thoughts that emphasize on differences between "us" and "others" faced a new wave of popularity. In this viewpoint, a normative place or social life should avoid non-endemic ingredients (humans, phenomenon, cultural issues and even political thoughts). As a result, numbers of social, political, and even spatial barriers increased by xenophobia. The expanding sense of fear, as Louise Amoore (2008:113) mentioned, leads to the idea that "ways of life are framed in terms of securing normality". Nonetheless, this emphasis on normality caused a new emphasis on differences that can develop social, cultural and racial gaps and consequently increase a reciprocal fear among a society which is divided to "us" and "others". Denying pluralism in a society and culture not only resulted in social division, but also caused numerous new problems which are rooted in the division of humanity into "us" and "others". Because, it provides a license to immoral acquits with others for in power groups. Negri and Hardt (2012:190) mentioned that "production of otherness through Manichean reason of exclusion" is an "imperialistic act" that restricts colonized people from the circles of humanity. Negri and Hardt (Ibid) in following their debate concluded that this discrimination and bordering cause an "increasingly agitation".

Although traces of creation of us versus others could be found in ancient history, said (2003) believed that coining the concept of "East" as a difference place during the first encountering of Christian west with Islamic

territories has played an important role. In other words, for Said (Ibid), the concept of "East" is produced. Said believed that the East is a production of geographical imagination rather than a simple geographical name that is fulfilled with mysterious phenomena and life. Therefore, Orientalism is a form of paranoia that feeds on cartographies of fear by producing 'our' world negatively through the construction of a perverse 'Other'(Springer,2011:90). This means that concept of otherness not only is used for discrimination between us and others, but also for colonization and domination. In this process, others are represented as the subject of colonization which need to be trained, civilized and settled in the western/our cultural frameworks. In the reason of colonist representation, the creation of other contains two characteristics; firstly, colonized is not a simple one, but is a produced other. Secondly, other is a source of reverse version of us. This is the evilness of other that indicates wellness, civilization and excellence of European self. In other words, Euro-centric thought gains one part of its discriminative identity from the "negative dialectic of recognition" (Negri and Hardt,2012:193-194) which means identifying self with reverse aspect of characteristics that is ascribed to other. Gianni Vattimo (2013:53) believes this issue is rooted in history of western thought that considers itself as "center of world". He draws our attention toward "singular linier of history" which is the "representation of past that is produced by superior classes and social groups". This attitude toward interpretation of world causes numerous inequalities in the realm of relations and interactions among people, places, spaces, social groups and classes and even societies and consequently demonstrates itself inside spatial identities.

Sources in societies and spaces are rare, and due to this reason, there is a competition for both material and non-martial assets. In this context, discriminative politics that enhance differences is considered as a tool for transcendence in place and space. This issue leads to hegemony in space and the production of "hegemonic identity of place" (Larsen,2004:947). As Gramsci (1957 Quoted in: Larsen,2004:947) mentioned, "hegemony is characterized by the submission of subordinate groups to a dominant social order through complicity, force, or fear". Hegemony illustrates itself in various aspects of human's life, like culture and politics. Gramsci (1971 Quoted in Story,2010:21) discussed that the function of hegemony in

cultural studies reminds us that popular culture is a combination and equilibrium of subcultures which are produced by public, labor class and the culture that is produced by capitalist cultural industries. Therefore, popular culture's characteristics are paradoxical amalgam of inferior and superior forces, resistance and merge, and are both commercial and original which contain structure and activism (Story,2010:21). These qualities present an important position to popular culture in the analysis of hegemony. Therefore, " Any political analysis of the operation of dominance must take full account of the role of institutions of popular culture in the reproduction of cultural (and thus political) norms" (Sharp,1996:558).

Cultural and political norms which are produced in the popular culture are related to representations. The act of representation is rooted in the "hypothetical equity of sign and real issue" (Baudrillard,2013:91). Therefore, " illustration of phenomenon and subjects which are not in the eye-sight and even cannot be understood directly become feasible by representation" (Deleuze,2013:72). Connection of subjects which are represented and the society which is the audience of representations widely depends on culture, so cultural phenomena do not get meaning by themselves, and their meanings are inevitably represented by culture. Although universes exist independent of representations, its meaning is dependent on the representation of universes. As a result, representation is a measure through which we transform a reality into a meaningful issue, share constructed meanings about us, others and world with each other and even debate about them (Story,2010:23). Nonetheless, in spite of the fact that meanings which are presented in the culture by representation are always depicted through an image of true reality, the accuracy of the images of phenomenon and realities cannot be assumed as the reality itself. "Pictorial reflection of reality" is mentioned by Jean Baudrillard (2013:91) in the framework of a chain of reflective images that are sequential: "(1) image is reflection of primary reality; (2) image covers and distorts primary reality; (3) image covers the absence of primary reality; and (4) not only image has no relation with any reality, but also it is a pure simulation of itself". Therefore, we should be aware about the discrimination of truth of what is represented and its simulations. The importance of this discrimination is due to the fact that representation is able to distort the truth. From geographical perspective, this distortion can occur in all sorts of geopolitical

representations and geographical imagination; from dualities which are created during the age of explorations at global scale to othernesses which are produced in the everyday life of contemporary time at local scale. Nonetheless, the distortion of geographical facts is mostly identified by Euro-centric attitudes toward the world.

In this European perception of world's geography, dominant attitude relays on a dual reality that define others in comparison with our identity. In other words, as Derek Gregory (2004) mentioned, others are the "negative image of us". Negri and Hardt (2012,190) discussed that this Euro-centric attitude toward the world is rooted in "the colonial history of Europe". They continued that "the colonized subject constructed in the metropolitan's imaginations as other. Therefore, the colonized is existed from the inclusion of European civilized values". This perception about others ignore cultural differences and wakens humanistic values. Because, in this attitude, traces of negative emotion and sense of superiority toward others are identifiable. Centralizing values that defines social and geographical identity of a specific group can marginalize others' identity and can facilitate judgments about their beliefs and belongings. Consequently, various aspects of others' life, territory, identity, values, culture, history and even rights are affected by representations and imaginations that are produced by dominant powers. In recent decades, representations of others' geographical spaces have increased and accelerated by what is called " Techno-babble" by Asa Briggs and Peter Burke (2002). In their notion, in the new realm of media which is influenced by television, video players, computers and recently social media, "audience is decentralized and freed from visualization" by itself. This means that they are influenced by images that are presented in the media. to explain this idea, we can refer to maps; maps are two-dimensional objects that have become popular for political and geographical interpretations, and introduce the surrounded world in a flat image, while our earth is circular. When the geographical perception of the world degrades to a two-dimensional image instead of three-dimensional view, it helps us to represent facts in an understandable manner, but at the same time, it misinforms audience about distances and areas. For instance, as Iranian citizens living in Iran, we were educated that the USA is the furthest place in the world because it is located in the far left of maps, because of common geographic maps. While on the globe model this distance seems

much closer. This geographical and represented distance even was deepened by media representations that emphasize on political, economic, cultural differences. Therefore, we can say that the tradition of depicting and interpreting the world based on the geographical distance somehow influence our understanding about our world. When the assessment criterion of public's awareness about geographical spaces, and especially spaces, which are considered as foreign is the presentation of a flat map, and in other words, geographical perception is reduced to two dimensions, there is a possibility for replacing geographical perception of space/place with representation. As Gianni Vattimo (2013:57) mentioned;"Within a world that criterion of exact representation of reality is the complete similarity and homogeneity of map with the territory, what is the meaning of information freedom and even existence of more than one radio or television transmitter? In practice, abundance of possible information about uncountable various version of reality, transform the visualizing the unique reality into a difficult task. Maybe in the mass media's world Friedrich Nietzsche's prediction was took the color of reality; In the end, the world of reality become a legend".

**Figure 1: Saigon Execution.1968**



**Source:** Eddie Adams. Associated Press

In recent decades, with the expansion of mass media, and recently social media, people have been accessing more information. Due to this reason, some critics discuss that truth is in the eyes of beholders. Nonetheless, Baudrillard (1983 Quoted in Chapman,2013:385) debated that "individual's life are saturated by media's image. consequently, reality is transformed to virtuality and created the hyper-reality". This means that everyone who has the ability for producing information can influence public ideas. But all people do not have access to this power. Therefore, in the shadow of media,



world is populated by two groups: a group which is interacting and another group which is interacted. Information that flows through media plays a crucial role in the process of representation. Because visual representation is placed in the center of stereotypes' structure that is accompanied by differences of different groups of people (McAuliffe,2007). In spite of stereotypes which are produced and circulated both verbally and visually, we must remember that until the late 19th century, the majority of representations are circulated as oral and written narrations. From this point, increasing popularity of photography and later motion pictures allowed individuals to document, simulate and narrate events. Therefore, the act of representation is facilitated and increased by novel innovations. The importance of an image in human life is so important that Sigmund Freud (1962) believed that photography is conducive to humans' ability to recall memories. Recalling a memory happens in both personal and social life and with regard to Freud's idea, visual memories play a crucial role in our understandings about the world, history and morality. Kiss of Victory Day, for instance, is an iconic photo which was taken by Alfred Eisenstaedt and recalls the historical memory of Americans about Great War, the only war that is backed by the majority of USA citizens. In contrast, Saigon Execution, which was captured by Eddie Adams, is a photographic representation of immoral consequences of war. These two photos stories are the indicators of media's power in the creation of what is called " Grand Narratives " by Jean-François Lyotard (quoted in Vattimo,2013:53). Grand Narratives can influence people's attitudes toward various issues and due to this reason, they function for diverse policies such as discrimination policies which are used for categorizing humanity into "us" and "others" and "our" and "their". As a result, we have to be aware of how representations function, what their purpose are, who benefits from them, who are influenced by representations and what are the short term and long lasting effects of them. Because, they can be both productive and destructive for humanity (Ahmadypour and Rashidi,2020) and this issue transforms them into crucial subjects that are controversial in diverse situations and places.

### **5. Conclusion**

Discriminative policies are the basis for recognizing "us" versus "others". As we discussed before, a considerable proportion of reasons which are used for legalizing, moralizing, and dividing men into us against others lie on the

interpretations that justify sense of fear. This justification uses imaginations for reasoning actions, behaviors, ideas and more importantly threats that are ascribed to individuals, social groups, ethnics, nations, spaces, places and geographies which are categorized as "aliens" and "them" or "their". During the time, these stereotypes augmented the geographical imaginations and assisted in expanding misattributions about spaces and places which belonged to individuals that are considered as others and consequently transform them into "spaces of fear". Perception of space in various ways is under the influence of culture, system of meanings, spatial emotions, history, function of power in the place and space and its interests and policies in there, spatial experiences, geographical imaginations and representations. Each of them has the potential for misunderstanding and abuse, and due to this reason, every space and place can face challenges which are rooted mostly in imaginations that are ascribed to people who are defined as others, and consequently, the problem of "otherness" is increased. In this process, both "us" and "others" find themselves in the shadow of threats which are imputed to them or their counterpart. The final outcome of this process is the division of humanity and the creation of spaces of fear. Therefore, we have to be aware about the functions of geographical imaginations and should be equipped with unbiased knowledge to prevent society from dividing itself, defining a group as "us" and another as "them", and categorizing spaces into "our" and "their".

### **6.Acknowledgmen**

This paper is presented to Professor Akbar Alemi, a good heart that was an excellent mentor, a lovely friend, and venerated colleague for us. Just hours after fulfilling this work he left us, our hearts broke and our shared journey that begun six years ago remains unfinished. Although we are deprived from his presence, thanks to what we learnt from Akbar we know that there are untaken paths that should be begin. May his soul rest in peace.



*In memory of Akbar Alemi, 1945-2020*

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