Globalizing Contemporary War

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Opinion Paper

Abstract: *There are a plethora of social problems present throughout the world in which America has deemed a type of 'war.' Some of these unconventional wars include: The War on Poverty presented in 1964; The War on Drugs announced in 1971; The War on Cancer commencing in 1971; The War Against Illiteracy beginning in the 1970s; and after September 11, 2001 The War on Terror was announced (Raz, 2008). These contemporary 'wars' have transformed the meaning of the word 'war.' Labeling these missions 'wars,' presents a stigma and encourages a dichotomy between good and bad; when in fact these 'wars' as they are presented do not have an attainable end in which a winner is declared. The definition of war is, "a state of usually open and declared armed hostile conflict between states or nations" or "a state of hostility, conflict, or antagonism; a struggle or competition between opposing forces or for a particular end" (War, 2008).*

This successful attempt to downplay war has produced detrimental effects around the world. The most recent, War on Terror, is perhaps the most misleading of them all. I will examine the semantics behind this struggle, the War on Terror. I will identify key components of how this 'war' began. Finally, I will analyze the effects of this struggle in the international arena with respect to several nations' policies. It is alleged that several state governments have used this 'war' as an opportunity to advance their own ideologies or goals.

1. Introduction

A plethora of social problems exist throughout the world in which America has deemed a type of 'war.' Some of these unconventional wars include: The War on Poverty presented in 1964; The War on Drugs announced in 1971; The War on Cancer began in 1971; The War Against Illiteracy began in the 1970s; and after September 11, 2001 The War on Terror was announced (Raz, 2008). These contemporary 'wars' have transformed the meaning of the word 'war.' Labeling these missions 'wars,' presents a stigma and

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This successful attempt to downplay war has produced detrimental effects around the world. The most recent, War on Terror, is perhaps the most misleading of them all. This War on Terror signifies a war on a method. Terror is a method used on an enemy to inflict harm. As there is no formal agreed upon definition of terrorism, I will utilize the definition from the Department of Defense (2008). It states, "The calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological" (p. 560). Waging war on a tactic promotes a militaristic ideology that shadows the globe. The hegemonic discourse of the United States has provoked global turmoil surrounding this term. I will examine the semantics behind this struggle, the War on Terror. I will identify key components of how this 'war' began. Finally, I will analyze the effects of this struggle in the international arena with respect to several nations' policies. It is alleged that several state governments have used this 'war' as an opportunity to advance their own ideologies or goals.

2. Semantics

Following the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001, the United States did not declare it "an international crime against humanity," instead it was an act of 'war' (Vanaik, 2007, p. 119). Vanaik (2007) argues that this declaration was intentional. The label of war enables the opponent to respond with military action at any time. The further label of a "global" war on terror enables the opponent to respond anywhere they deem necessary.

The War on Terror, and the means in which it is presented, suggests an ongoing struggle. To rid the world of "terror" is a massive task that cannot be accomplished in one lifetime. Therefore, this 'war' has created an aura of

waiting. In essence, the United States is "waiting for the next attack, waiting for the spread of a virus, waiting for the killing of terrorists, waiting as a prolong moment of suspension and anxiety, of terror transformed into spectacle…" (Aretxaga, 2001, p. 141). The language surrounding this struggle has cultivated a society on edge. It has transformed the ways in which the world functions. It is necessary to analyze the semantics surrounding the War on Terror, and terrorism itself, in order to comprehend this timeless struggle.

The media plays a persuasive role in the War on Terror. The media presents information by framing it, which constructs "an entire social reality" (DiMaggio, 2008, p. 21). This method of framing social issues allows a world filled with 'wars' on nouns. The media chooses a topic to center the majority of the reports on in any given period (DiMaggio, 2008). This creates an unconscious frenzy surrounding a social concern. In turn, the public accepts a declaration of 'war' on that issue. In addition, the media is believed to go one step further and sway, or even manipulate public opinion one way or another on current events. As the media, or television, is the only means in which many Americans retain their news, the influence of that media is substantial (DiMaggio, 2008).

The rhetoric used by George W. Bush in his addresses to the nation following the September 11 attacks, promotes an old-school, warlike ideology. This rhetoric was extremely persuasive in increasing nationalism, patriotism, and a sense of collective within the United States. In addition, the words and phrases that President Bush exercised contributed to the militaristic actions of the nation and attitudes of the people at that time. He spoke about the "crusade of good against evil," "a war to save the world" (Aretxaga, 2001, p. 141). He stated that every nation is "either with us or with the terrorists" (Bush, 2001). The President spoke of defending freedom and democracy throughout the world, repeatedly, regardless of those region's wishes. He stated, "Some speak of an age of terror. I know there are struggles ahead and dangers to face. But this country will define our times, not be defined by them" (Bush, 2001). This has not been confirmed yet. The rhetoric used by President Bush possesses an aura of Jervis's cognitive

approach in accounting for war. Jervis states that coming to over simplified conclusions based on your own bias and worldview will lead to conflict (Cashman, 2000).

In an effort to modernize British political thinking and contribute to peaceful endeavors at home, the British cabinet ministers eliminated the phrase 'War on Terror' in December 2006. They deemed this phrase to encourage isolation and militancy. Based on intelligence, the Foreign Office concluded that the reference to this struggle as a 'war' or 'battle' only increased support with young British Muslims. In relinquishing these terms, it was anticipated that the next generation would not defend the 'War on Terror' (Burke, 2006).

3. Strategy

On an international level, the decision to launch these types of timeless wars, such as the War on Terror, can be attributed to the strong hegemonic stance of the United States in the global system. According to Cashman (2008), the dominant player will remain aware of all long-term threats. Therefore, since the United States has not launched preventative wars, in recent decades, it can be assumed that the preventative wars, the 'wars on' metaphors, have assumed the role of long-term threats. The War in Iraq has accompanied the War on Terror as a measure of protection. According to prospect theory, a party will intrepidly act, accepting great risk, when faced with the prospect of great loss (Cashman, 2008).

The individual worldviews of U.S. leaders is important in understanding the techniques and actions that were implemented. The first school of thought, and the dominant one within the Bush administration, was the traditional realists. This included G.H.W. Bush, Condoleezza Rice, and Colin Powell. They refrained from deploying U.S. forces for "peacekeeping missions and nation building" and were reluctant to engage in humanitarian missions (Cashman, 2008, p. 329). They believed these efforts were "idealistic" in nature and their efforts would be better spent on improving international relations with major powers (Cashman, 2008, p. 329).

The next group was the assertive nationalists, including Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld. Though they

agreed with the realists, they would prefer to engage in defeating enemies and taking on national threats. They were concerned about the American image and did not want to appear weak (Cashman, 2008). The neoconservatives, though a long list, they consisted of the secondary level of the cabinet. They viewed politics in terms of absolutes: good versus evil. They were in favor of forceful promotion of American ideals (Cashman, 2008). It has been suggested that the War on Terror, and the aftereffects of September 11, 2001, caused the President to adhere to more risky behavior. The President is heavily religious and has presented the War on Terror as the mission of his generation. He is a fundamentalist and sees the world in "Manchurian terms" as was evident in his speech rhetoric (Cashman, 2008, p. 335). It is believed that President Bush is a pragmatist, who does not think twice, and makes decisions in the moment (Cashman, 2008); hence the "War on Terror" being born.

According to Cashman (2008), rational choice theory was utilized by the zero-sum Bush administration. Rational choice theory advocates war when the gains outweigh the losses. Cashman (2008) speculates on the rationale behind the decision to wage war: 1) The perceived costs including economic, military, and political were low. 2) The U.S. military was significantly stronger than the opponent was. 3) The success of regime change was probable. 4) The outcomes of invasion were high and outweighed the negative aspects of neutrality. For example, the prospect of democracy, removing Saddam Hussein, etc, compared to weapons of mass destruction entering the wrong hands and creating terrorist safe havens. 5) It was improbable that Iraq would gain military allies in the struggle. Therefore, the administration advocated the invasion. This decision was a central component to the War on Terror. Clearly, rational choice theory has several shortcomings. The concept of a collective versus an individual within this theory presents a potential conflict. The method that is best for the individual may not be best for the group. In addition, social norms and structure contribute to the decision in question. Therefore, the same rational being in one society will make a completely different decision if raised in a different environment (Ritzer and Goodman, 2004). The rationale is entirely subjective and is not a concrete means of assessment.

It is a common practice for a nation to use war as a scapegoat for internal pressures (Cashman, 2000). This serves to divert attention from the domestic problems that could be attributed to the leader of that nation and create illusive downtime in which a resolution can be created for the internal issue, or the internal struggle can later be attributed to the war. In the meantime, the nation experiences a surge in patriotism. In a democratic nation, it is considered more 'difficult' to go to war than in an autocratic nation. This is due to the nature of a democracy, as popular support is vital. A surge in patriotism established by scapegoating can yield positive results for mending internal concerns (Cashman, 2000).

4. New Wars

The shock of a terrorist attack on U.S. soil caused an almost immediate reaction to implement symmetric war strategies used for traditional warfare.

> "Which is more representative of modern war: The United States unleashing high-tech arsenals to defeat dubious Third World regimes swiftly or machete-wielding insurgents fighting brutal civil wars in Africa? The short answer: both. Yet neither of these scenarios conforms to the classic model of warfare as a titanic struggle between rival great powers. It's time to update the textbooks and reappraise the nature of war" (Freedman, 2003, p. 16).

The era of traditional wars is over and new wars are beginning to surface. Old wars are centered on battles between soldiers in uniforms, fighting from different states. Old wars are fought (ideally) based on certain rules from the Geneva and Hague Conventions (Kaldor, 2005). Traditional wars advocated state building whereas new wars are often contextualized within states affected by globalization causing dissolution. The rise of globalization has contributed to the increase in contemporary wars (Malesevic, 2008). According to Kaldor (2005), new wars are fought between both state and non-state actors with the goal of constructing a new identity. New wars omit

a sense of "shared political community" (Kaldor, 2005, p. 492). These wars encompass the more recent conflicts evident around the globe, including struggles against terrorism, religion, ethnicity, and genocide.

Malesevic (2008) contests the theories of Bauman, Shaw, and Kaldor who state that new wars are solely based on identity. They postulate that the previous notions of ideology and nationalism are no longer a cause of war. Malesevic (2008) argues that identity is a key component of these ideals. In support of Malesevic's theory (2008), one simply does not exist without the other. New wars are conceived in a holistic foundation. The nationalistic root of these wars on nouns is the very reason for their existence. It brings together a community to instill a common goal.

In order to defeat or eliminate these new wars, it is imperative to adopt alternative strategies then those used in old wars. For example, in the War on Terror, terrorists are given political status as the enemy. This is in turn what they are striving for, to be involved in a 'war.' However, if the terrorists were described and labeled as criminals, this would enable the United States and its allies to precede with new war tactics such as policing and intelligence and abandon such a militarized strategy (Kaldor, 2005). Thus far, the tactics employed in the War on Terror have been conventional, such as airstrikes and covert operations. However, there is evidence suggesting that the U.S. military has recruited several individuals from Hollywood to predict possible terrorist targets (Aretxaga, 2001).

The traditional schools of military tactics such as deterrence and containment would not be effective in this environment. The 'enemy' is not a state; it is hard to define. Deterrence theory advocates bullying and threats (Cashman, 2000); this tactic would not be effective to combat terrorist entities. Containment is not effective as the 'enemies' belongs to "rogue states" (Cashman, 2008, p. 329). Therefore, the U.S. administration's old school ideologies would suggest that preemptive measures are the only alternative.

Due to the language and tactics utilized in this 'war,' several scholars have gone as far as to cast the label of Western imperialism (Aretxaga, 2001). Brzoska (2004)

suggests that new wars can only be ended by "external intervention" (p.113). However, it is not clear what is meant by external. An external peacekeeping force could intervene with resolution tactics, or a nation that is not a main participant could intervene; however, these forces will still possess some bias towards one side or the other. The nation may be an ally or the organization may be financially supported by one side or the other. It is imperative to define what is meant by "external intervention" in this case.

The new wars, which utilize asymmetric warfare, possess more divergent goals then traditional symmetric warfare. An example of asymmetric warfare is when terror is used by state or non-state actors when they do not possess a strong military force. The challenger is striving to dismantle political and economic systems. The goal is to continue the violence (Brzoska, 2004). Thus, defeating the entire definition of war, which suggests an end. Is it possible that if the War on Terror was not labeled a war, and military efforts were not deployed at the inception, then terrorist organizations would see a means to satisfy their goals and achieve their means on a more peaceful level? The words 'war' and 'military' may invoke a self-fulfilling prophecy. Aretxaga (2001) argues, "That the War on Terrorism might indeed create the very enemy it is seeking to eradicate" (p. 147). He states that this may enforce a constant state of war perpetuating a military and police society, which will overthrow the fundamentals of American democracy and capitalism (Aretxaga, 2001).

5. Global Implications

A study on the "Trends in Global Terrorism" in 2006 implicated the War in Iraq to be a "cause célèbre" for jihadists (p. 2). The reference to jihadist in this case is questionable; however, it is assumed a derogatory term in reference to a terrorist. This struggle against terrorism has created a surge in support for a "global jihadist movement" and anti-American sentiments (Trends, 2006, p. 2). This war has caused the movement to grow and branch out. It is no longer a centralized mission; cells have surfaced all over the world. The U.S. Government's intelligence report indicated

that there were four main causes for the increasing terrorist movement:

> "1) Entrenched grievances, such as corruption, injustice, and fear of Western domination, leading to anger, humiliation, and a sense of powerlessness; 2) The Iraq jihad; 3) The slow pace of real and sustained economic, social, and political reforms in many Muslim majority nations; and 4) Pervasive anti-US sentiment among most Muslims, all of which jihadists exploit" (Trends, 2006, p. 2).

The remaining document goes on to deplorably discuss old school tactics for defeating enemies. It states that exposing the fissures in the Muslim extremist ideology will create a reduction in supporters. It is suggesting that a form of trickery and exposure must be utilized to attain victory. It is suggesting that a focus on the vulnerabilities of the Muslim community will facilitate a divide. The greatest strength, as claimed in the document, is to dissuade the Muslim population that the terrorists seek to gain (Trends, 2006, p. 3). It is appalling that in 2006, the administration remains stagnant in these tactics as opposed to utilizing more affective conflict resolution techniques that exist. This conflict is asymmetrical; it must be tackled head on using a new communicative strategy.

The efforts to promote democracy in Iraq have spawned contrary results in other areas around the globe. Democracy is a conflictual term in itself as it is a subjective notion. The American ideals of democracy may be different then the Iraqi principles of democracy, as the War on Terror has illustrated. This conflict has caused other regions such as Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa to strengthen their authoritative fundamentals. They use the conditions in Iraq to justify their resistance towards democracy (Whitaker, 2008).

In addition, several regions such as Mali, Thailand, and Indonesia, have experienced an increase in violence due to collaboration efforts for the War on Terror (Whitaker, 2008). A terrorist group known as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), with strong ties to al-Qa'ida, is centered in Southeast Asia. This terrorist network has been identified in several terrorist

attacks in the region, including the attack in Bali in 2002. However, the leader of JI has been detained but cells do continue to operate in the region. Nations such as Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines were quick to join forces with the U.S. in countering terrorist activities; however, other nations in the region were hesitant to follow suit until they identified the extent of their vulnerability as targets (Vaughn, et al., 2007).

The United States, in an effort to advance the global War on Terror, has constructed agreements with potential allies in the fight, and provided arms to those countries. In a study of 25 countries, it was discovered that these regions received five times more in arms from the United States over the past five years, than in the five years before September 11, 2001 (Stohl, 2007). Several of these regions are politically unstable and/or are in obvious violation of human rights practices; thus, these agreements are in violation of the Arms Export Control Act and Foreign Assistance Act (Stohl, 2007). In a struggle for freedom, democracy, and a world rid of terror, selling arms to anyone who agrees to unite in the fight is not a safe or intelligent measure.

After September 11, 2001, the U.S. government joined forces with the Columbian government to combat the War on Terror. The U.S. provided Columbia with a $93 million counterterrorism aid package. The funds were awarded to protect the oil pipeline in Columbia, which was under guerilla control. The U.S. deployed Special Forces to aid in the area and trained the Columbian soldiers. There were constant guerilla attacks in the area on the pipeline and soldiers alike. This illustrates how the War on Terror has allowed the U.S. to send troops to an intense area plagued with unrest and train a Columbian army brigade who holds close ties to right-wing paramilitary groups responsible for horrific human rights violations (Leech, 2004).

After the terrorist attacks of 2002, Kenya set up a plethora of organizations and initiatives with the U.S. to help combat the epidemic. They are an ally in this 'war.' However, Kenya prefers not to publicize its efforts, as they fear retaliation or stigmatization, as was the case in recent elections. They are a transitional democracy and do not want to jeopardize their progress (Whitaker, 2008). The Bush administration did not display great interest in the

turmoil in many African regions before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. However, after that time efforts were made with several nations, such as with Ethiopia in 2005. Subsequent to these efforts, the U.S. along with Ethiopia entered Somalia to tackle an Islamic regime with supposed ties to al-Qa'ida. Critics insist that the U.S. has only recently begun to take interest in Africa due to the War on Terror and has turned its back on deep-rooted issues in the continent such as poverty (Sanders, 2008).

6. Conclusion

Interventionists call for democracies to intervene and make autocratic states more democratic (Cashman, 2000), such as the case in Iraq. President Bush appears to be an advocate of this method as he stated in his address after September 11. This technique transforms war into a means for peace. As a nation, and throughout the world, it is imperative to restore the Foucauldian notion that knowledge produces power and not vice versa (Bayouini, 2004). This humility would produce positive affects for the War on Terror. The barbaric notions of Carl Schmitt, for example, who is a professor that collaborated with the Nazi party, must be abandoned. He argued, "Even in industrial states, power rested with those who could wield violence when necessary" (Brzoska, 2004, p. 114).

The protracted struggle can continue interminable against an undefined enemy, which could provide an ultimate scapegoat for daily acts of violence and progression of laws infringing on civil liberties. Aretxaga (2001) purposes that this is in effect in "many areas of the world" (p. 149), but fails to define them. The War on Terror, in its metaphorical state, acts as a distraction for other social problems. Due to its lack of defined enemy, this war has the potential to continueperpetually.

A culture of fear has infiltrated America. The War on Terror has become a household name, masked by fear and anxiety. This underlying fear felt by all citizens gives immense power to the government. Times of turmoil provide opportunities for governments to pursue alternative avenues without great opposition. The era of new wars is upon us. It is imperative to rid officials of the methods of traditional warfare and begin to think outside the box. The field of

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conflict resolution can provide alternative solutions that must be examined. The ripple effect evident across the globe, due to the War on Terror, is limitless. We will continue to witness the effects of the 'war' in every nation, both positive and negative.

The implications of this research should aid in identifying fissures within the governments cost benefit analysis. In addition, the repercussions involved in labels and language is vast. In today's globalizing world, it is imperative not to frivolously coin phrases and key terms. Definitions are crucial in international relations. Due to the erratic branding of the 'War on Terror,' the world is faced with a 'war' that lacks a probable conclusion. In addition, it is critical to track the changes, spawned by the War on Terror, regarding democracy and civil rights in nations around the world. These patterns will provide intelligence and contribute to preventing additional clashes of civilization.

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