

# Analyzing the 'war on terror' and its impact on Americans

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*Jennifer Noud, undergraduate at Florida State university, examines how the war on terror has evolved and impacted on Americans since 9/11.*



Previous modern wars have traditionally been broadcast through radio and then television. The current 'war on terror' is drastically distinctive because of both the advent of the internet and the way the war is being reported. In the article, "The Real Terror War Is On the Internet" a U. S. National Intelligence Estimate says that radicalization is occurring rapidly and anonymously because of the internet; this makes surprise attacks more likely, especially attacks by unknown groups that use the internet. Furthering its argument the article states that "we judge that groups of all stripes will increasingly use the Internet to communicate, propagandize, recruit, train and obtain logistical and financial support".

Al-Qaeda officers have been using the internet increasingly to recruit members and plan attacks. The U.S. is trying to take down Al-Qaeda and for us to be successful we need to start taking internet websites more seriously. A Major General of the U.S. Army says he sees 16 and 17 year olds on the battlefield fighting for al-Qaeda because they were recruited from the internet. The free speech amendment extends to all Americans. However, there is a line to be drawn. Free speech does not allow people to post terrorist sites, support terrorist recruitment or terrorist attacks. These sites need to be taken down and anyone who is caught doing this should be apprehended. Terrorist groups have even even posted videos to Youtube, showing members of terrorists group killing others. Youtube had to take these videos down and make a statement saying they do not endorse terrorist organizations.

The internet can still be a good source of information about the war on terror by giving you multiple opportunities to find events from news sites and then organize the data. This can give a person a well-rounded view of the events happening in the war instead of getting the war from just one biased perspective.

In the article "The Unseen War" by Massing, he shows that the media on the war on terror is not as accurate as Americans hope it is. Journalists were listening to briefs that showed choreographed missiles hitting American soldiers giving food to the Iraqi people and a general saying they are still on target. Almost every briefing would go something like this and have a cookie-cutter agenda without real facts being said. When journalists asked a question that wasn't on their agenda or to their liking, the general wouldn't call them on again. News reporters also gave a different view depending on where a person lived. A person watching BBC would get a different report than a person watching CNN. Just like listening to a radio station in America versus listening to a radio such as Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera can now be found online and people can stream it around the world via the internet. This allowed many Americans to see what was going on in Iraq, contradicting what many American based news stations were broadcasting. Despite the now greater diversity in news sources thanks to the internet, most Americans do not log onto alternative news sites such as Al Jazeera, in part because it is an Arabic news station and it has to be translated.

A further issue, particularly with Arabic news sources is a degree of xenophobia. These was demonstrated shortly after 9/11, particularly towards Islamic and Hindu people.

## 'War on terror'?

Bush's speech on the "Axis of Evil" clearly states we are at war. The problem with this speech is that the war we are fighting isn't a true war at all. In previous wars, we had a specific enemy, be it the Nazi's or Japanese during the Second World War. The war on terror is waging a war on all terror. Terror is an abstract concept, it is not tangible and similar to other abstract wars like the war on poverty.

Bush, by creating the axis of evil paradigm has made it much more difficult to end the 'war on terror' because this war, when not concentrated on a single group/area, forms a generalized idea that spans the globe.

The results of the war on terror among the American people is life changing. Since 9/11 and the war on terror being announced, the lives of the American people have been tainted. There is more security at airports, more racial profiling and more fear of another terrorist attack. The ACLU is trying to teach people about the war on terror which comes in the form of public education. The more knowledgeable a person is, the more likely the person will be aware of the war on terror and the consequences of it.

One example the fear caused by the war on terror is the practice of racial profiling. In the article, "Ordinary Americans and the War on Terror" Abudllah al-Kidd converted to Islam, was detained, held for two weeks in abominable conditions and charged as a material witness to one of his friends. His friend was being charged with posting a link to a website. The jury found him not guilty because he has the right to post anything he wants online. Al-Kidd, was found guilty by being associated with his friend who was not even convicted.

The war on terror has transformed many American citizens into victims.

In the article, "War on Terror" Walter Murray, a retired marine and Princeton professor, could not board his plane. He was on the no-fly list because he made a speech against President Bush.

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