The ‘new home front’ and the war on terror: ethical and political reframing of national and international politics

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This article uses the concept of the ‘new home front’ to address the ethical and political reframing of national and international politics in the ‘war on terror’. It examines the links between ethics and politics in the context of links between ‘home’ and the ‘front’. The first thing to make clear is that the ‘new home front’ in the war on terror has multiple dimensions to it. Just as it refers to links between ‘home’ (as in national or domestic) and the ‘front’ (as in the military spheres of action in Iraq and Afghanistan), it also refers literally to the home front, with terrorist attacks and continuing threats of them in the UK, importantly from home-grown as well as internationally networked terrorists. So there is a complex spatiality involved in the ethical contexts of policies and politics related to the war on terror that binds security issues at home to military action overseas in ways that are overt or not. I aim to unpack some of the less obvious dimensions of that complexity in three areas. All three relate to the problematic nature of assumed separations between domestic and foreign policy, between what is considered to be ‘out there’ (overseas, foreign) and what is ‘in here’ (home, domestic).

The first area concerns the varied impacts of new media connections as part of everyday life. The new media (the internet and diverse mobile devices linked to it) have disrupted traditional national vertical (top-down) linkages between political agents, the mass media and the public through a myriad horizontal real-time online connections. This means that it is far harder for governments to control the ethical content of information distributed about war, as demonstrated, for example, by the dissemination of pictures of prisoners being tortured in Abu Ghraib prison. The second area of spatial complexity relates to the pervasiveness of security concerns as integrative of domestic and foreign influences, in contrast to the predominant traditional view of security threats as external. The significance of home-grown terrorism, and intelligence and policing efforts to detect, prevent and punish it, have led to new ethical dilemmas for liberal democracies. The winning of hearts and minds is as much about persuading citizens of the legitimacy of the security imperatives that limit their liberal freedoms—the very freedoms such imperatives are ultimately intended to protect—as it is about encouraging them to be vigilant.

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and report on any suspicions they may have about potential threats. The third area of spatial complexity is probably the least overtly recognized in terms of the ethics and politics of the war on terror. It relates to everyday citizenship and multiculturalism and gender. Here the collective and individual arenas are touched on in ways that demonstrate some of the deeper politics of the war on terror, including identity politics. Multiculturalism has been substantially in the foreground of this war and a new reflexivity about liberalism within and beyond the UK. Women and gender relations have been central to ethical tensions in the war on terror. They have frequently featured in links between foreign and domestic policy, including in the contexts of multicultural politics and religious issues.

**New media, everyday life and the war on terror**

Notions of the home front were pivotal to both the First and Second World Wars, but especially the latter. They tapped into deep ethical, political, economic and social facets of warfare: the connections between armed forces in battle and families back home; the mobilization of national communities for the war effort; heightened security and civil defence efforts at home, as symbolized in the iconic Home Guard of the Second World War; and the attacks on home territory resulting in mass evacuations of children from cities.1 The home front signals the inextricable links between wars fought at a distance and the multiple connections with home societies. These links operate at the macro level of national policy, defence and military strategy, mobilization of the economy and workforce to the war effort, propaganda and censorship. They also operate at the micro everyday level through letters home and food parcels, telegrams or visits bearing bad news from the front to loved ones at home, and the long-term trauma of maimed service personnel returning home. The concept of ‘total war’ in the Second World War indicated the intensity of the links between home and front, with whole societies and economies mobilized towards the war effort.2 The total war scenario held within it the complex spatial dynamics of modern warfare, where a vast array of military and communications technologies transcend the limitations of time and space.3 The role of the media, and the centrality of state efforts to exert control over the flow of information and the nature of it, are as starkly demonstrated in the status and function of ‘embedded’ reporters in the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as in the historically well-documented practices of propaganda and censorship.4

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Now that we have moved from the mass media age to the new media age, information flows have become far more diverse and decentralized, with horizontal (bottom-up) communications expanding exponentially and often challenging and disrupting vertical (top-down) flows. In the pre-internet environment, state control and dominance of information flows were much easier than they are now, as many instances in the war on terror have demonstrated. These developments make clear that in thinking about international politics in the new media age we need to think in ‘sociospatial’ as much as in traditional ‘geospatial’ terms. The geospatial physical world of bounded territorial states remains the central terrain of international politics, but the new sociospatial contexts of boundary-crossing virtual communications are now an inescapable part of it too. Our thinking about the new home front needs to reflect this spatial complexity. New media bring the front into connection with home in powerful instantaneous visual and textual ways on multiple levels that have direct impact on political and ethical considerations related to the war on terror.

There is a front that is literally ‘at home’ where terrorists attack, as well as the conventional front of war (military action in Iraq and Afghanistan). This situation will be considered further in the next section. Of course, the terrorists themselves make full use of new media in their horizontal attempts to attack the vertical control and power of the state, harnessing virtual networks within and across state boundaries to maintain themselves as organizational and communications entities as well as to disseminate their messages both publicly and privately. In these times of the ‘virtual state’ it is the case that such a proliferation of the use of new media for subversive purposes lays those who use them open to the heightened surveillance that digital tracking enables. While terrorist use of new media is a primary security concern, the varieties of horizontal communication referred to above are much wider. They concern a range of individuals using new media for highly diverse purposes, many of which have political and ethical dimensions. There is space here to touch on only a few examples.

At the controversial end, take the torture pictures from Abu Ghraib. How long might it have taken for this abuse of prisoners by soldiers to have been uncovered (indeed, would it ever have been uncovered) without the mobile phones and internet connections that made possible the instantaneous transmission and wide dissemination of the images? The revelations of this torture constituted a major ethical strike that continues to reverberate against the allied forces, especially their justifications for going to war in Iraq in terms of doing good for the Iraqis. Along

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with the fierce debates about ‘extraordinary rendition’ and torture, and the detention and treatment of prisoners in Guanánamo Bay, these revelations expose the allies to being attacked for tyrannical behaviour. It could be argued that such exposures dramatically undermine vertical (state) claims to define the boundaries of ethics in war. We see instead horizontal interventions (e.g. soldiers capturing and sending on digital pictures of mistreatment of prisoners) and comments (in the media and in viewers’ and readers’ reactions to offline and online material) on what those interventions mean. But when we are considering the roles of new media in this context, it is also important to note the pervasiveness of their influence on bringing ‘fronts’ into closer connection with home in everyday senses.

This is illustrated in the diverse digital communication links, including the plethora of military and soldier (official and unofficial) blogs, which have brought the wider public as well as families and friends at home much closer in time and space to the actual experience of war on a day-to-day basis. If we move to the home front of terrorism in the UK itself, then we note the explosion of ‘citizen journalists’, as for example in the mobile phone images from people on the scene that dominated the early media coverage of the London 7/7 bombings. As BBC media correspondent Torin Douglas commented later:

It may not be the most significant legacy of the London bombings, but 7 July 2005 marked a turning point for the media. That was the day the phenomenon of ‘user-generated content’ (UGC) or ‘citizens’ journalism’ came into its own in Britain, as members of the public took over the roles of photographers and news correspondents. That day, the BBC received 22,000 e-mails and text messages about the London tube and bus bombings. There were 300 photos—50 within an hour of the first bomb going off—and several video sequences. With events happening largely underground, far removed from the eyes of the media professionals, the mobile phone camera came into its own, helping illustrate the day’s horrific events in a way that would not have been possible before.

These examples demonstrate the extent to which the new media, in a wide range of ways, are integral to our analysis of the war on terror and the nature of the new home front. Horizontal (bottom-up) flows of information have been facilitated by the use of new media for various purposes, from soldier blogs to email contact from the front with relatives back home to citizen journalist mobile phone pictures of the immediate aftermath of terrorist bombings and the chaos caused. These bottom-up flows often directly disrupt the vertical (top-down, state) control of information, as starkly demonstrated in the Abu Ghraib torture pictures. When

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we consider the politics and ethics of the war on terror, it is clear that the multiple uses of the new media are part of the picture. In helping to reduce the effective distance between home and front, the new media are instrumental in blurring the distinctions between foreign and domestic settings. In their facilitation of opportunities for horizontal information flows, the new media are also part of the challenge to state management of ethical interpretations of foreign policy and military aims. Such factors indicate how new media developments contribute to shifts in international politics to incorporate the sociospatial (virtual) as well as the more familiar geospatial (physical) environments.

The new home front and liberalism under strain

One of the major points of argument about the war on terror has been that it is not in any real sense a war at all in the manner of the First and Second World Wars: that is, a war between states. In simple terms, the war on terror has been framed as one in which the enemy is a loose network of shifting mobile cells of individuals and groupings (the terrorists) who cannot be regarded as an external threat as such in traditional state-centred international relations fashion.\(^{12}\) The concept of the war on terror has been discursively constructed at the level of high politics, is widely contested, and has continued to shift since the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks from standard security perspectives of external threats to the more complex sense of internal ones. The suicide bombers on the London transport system in July 2005 were resident members of the society they attacked: ‘enemies within’, pursuing a violent agenda antithetical to its peaceful principles of liberal discursive democracy. The threat structure of the war on terror (and thus its politics and ethics) is much more than a ‘vertical’ state scenario where top-down definitions of ‘justified’ violence predominate.\(^{13}\) It mixes what we can think of as ‘horizontal’ violent forces (terrorist networks across and within state boundaries) with ‘vertical’ state-centred ones (the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan). So the new home front in this war reflects this situation and the many ethical challenges it presents, including the controversial new cultures of securitization and surveillance that have increasingly become established.\(^{14}\)

The security priorities of the war on terror work to blur the boundaries between national and foreign policy (the domestic and the foreign) by reflecting


the ‘inside’ as much as the ‘outside’ nature not only of the threats themselves but inevitably also of the policies and strategies for tackling them, including prevention.\textsuperscript{15} The political and ethical qualities of the new home front in this context have therefore not surprisingly reflected this inside/outside dichotomy, with the principles and values of liberal democracy in a central role. In this section I want to unpack this aspect of the war on terror as well as to some extent its implications for our thinking about international politics more generally. The main perspective underpinning the points that follow is that multiple forms of reflexivity about liberalism have been a major characteristic of the war on terror, whether we are thinking about foreign policy and the execution of this very particular kind of ‘war’, or the many domestic policy changes that have been made during it, or the links between the two. In other words, this has been a period in which consideration of the politics and ethics of what the UK and its allies do in foreign policy, and how liberal or otherwise those acts might be, has increasingly been accompanied by inward consideration about the nature of the UK as a liberal society, and how this very liberalism can arguably be tested, compromised or undermined by the combination of foreign and domestic policy responses to the threats it faces.

With the war on terror nearly a decade old, consideration about whether such developments have had an impact on the nature of international politics more broadly is clearly increasingly relevant. Do the facets of the war on terror discussed here signal the inevitability of growing association between the foreign and the domestic and the blurring of the division between them? The new home front in this context is about, among other things, threats to liberalism and efforts to defend it. But just as the threats to liberalism are manifested at home and abroad, so efforts to defend it have been similarly manifested at home and abroad. And ethical concerns have been raised just as much about risks from a raft of counter-terrorist legislation and policies to liberalism at home and the liberal quality of life of domestic citizens, as about justifications for war and the treatment of enemy combatants and suspects (notably in Guantánamo Bay).\textsuperscript{16} At issue here are limits to liberalism and its core values (freedom of speech and movement, time restrictions on detention without trial, right to trial, privacy). Also at issue ethically are numerous questions about whether means justify ends and, if the end is to protect a liberal way of life but the means reduce the liberal experience of life, what the meanings and implications of this are. Here the specific nature of the war on terror is a factor too. Its open-ended and now enduring quality compromises even the possibility of answering such questions with any certainty.

One major problem, and obviously a deeply ethical one, is that there has never been any definite sense of when exactly this war will be over, or indeed what

\textsuperscript{15} On associated theoretical areas, see R. B. J. Walker, \textit{Inside/outside: international relations as political theory} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993). See also R. B. J. Walker, \textit{After the globe/before the world} (New York: Routledge, 2009); HM Government, \textit{Pursue, Protect, Prevent, Prepare}.

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precisely it would take to ‘win’ it. All that we know so far is that after nearly a decade it is not over yet; and in the meantime, quite apart from the myriad new anti-terrorist laws and policies under which citizens at home now live, the death toll of civilians and soldiers on the front continues to rise, with crowds honouring the repatriation of the bodies of service personnel at Wootton Bassett now an established ritual. As the Royal British Legion’s web page comments: ‘The Wootton Bassett tributes were started spontaneously two years ago by Legion members pausing to salute the cortège from nearby RAF Lyneham, used to return all those killed on operations. Since then, the repatriation ceremonies have grown to involve the entire town and have earned widespread praise and attention.’ In symbolic as well as actual senses, these tributes expand the significance of notions of the home front, and each time they occur are powerful markers of the extended nature of the war on terror and its human costs.

The longer the war goes on with mounting loss of life of service people and civilians, the greater the ethical dilemmas over means versus ends. And now that the focus is on Afghanistan as much as, if not more than, Iraq, there are questions to be considered about the different contexts and challenges and problems involved. The politics of the war on terror continues to expand, and not necessarily in ways that have been fully recognized at home as yet. One commentator has recently asked:

How can a war that has taken the lives of more UK service personnel than any other in half a century be met with such ambivalence? Or to put it another way: why are we not responding to Afghanistan in the way we did to Iraq? As 15,000 British, American and other Nato forces engage in the largest offensive of the nine-year war so far, the media coverage has ranged between supportive and cautious. Opinion polls suggest concern about issues such as overstretch, mission creep and, naturally, the death toll, but these anxieties are not expressed with the fury that accompanied Tony Blair’s great Iraqi misadventure.

Whether we are thinking of support for or protest against the Iraq war, such questions do point to the ethical problems of accountability (another core liberal value) that arise from the war on terror. They point to the implications of its vagueness in terms of reach, goals and duration. The reference to ‘ambivalence’ in the quote above is interesting here. Is it really a case of ambivalence, or is it more a matter of the failure or distortion of liberalism’s democratic workings in such circumstances? The vagueness of the war on terror hardly produces clearly identifiable points at which questions at stake can be interrogated and challenged by citizens at large. It works against the kind of transparency and public engagement favoured by liberal principles of democracy. On the contrary—and this

is fundamental to the ethical terrain of the war on terror—it leans towards an opacity that makes such engagement unlikely or at the very least problematic. So it may be that this is less a matter of ambivalence than one of the lack of the right political conditions to facilitate deep awareness and expression of political agency. And it might be that this situation could have longer-term impacts on the quality of liberal international politics that go beyond the war on terror scenario.

If this accountability problem and its effects as I set them out are at least a serious consideration, then they could lead to new perceptions of lack of agency that become embedded as apathy. Let me try to clarify further. Liberal ethics identifies individual agency and engagement as intrinsic to its workings. In other words, we might say that it aims to actively involve citizens and keep them ‘close’ to the larger workings and decisions of the political institutions that represent them and act on their behalf. But the pervasive qualities of vagueness related to the war on terror and the effects outlined here can be argued to have a contrary effect. They work rather against actively involving citizens, who are as a result distanced from the bigger picture and the decisions and actions being taken on their behalf.

It can be argued that we need at least to consider the prospect that this could result in perceived loss of agency and even apathy, and that, given how long the war on terror is lasting, this could well extend beyond it to the wider realm of international politics more generally. Here it is useful to consider another impact of the duration of the war on terror. The longer it has gone on and the more it has occupied the centre ground of international politics, including on the home front, the more it has come to define those politics, to squeeze out other areas of those politics. So one question that could be posed is: to what extent will what has happened in the war on terror and its handling by liberal states come to shape liberal approaches to international politics in the future, and especially the forms of government accountability to citizens? This would seem an important question for the ethical agenda of the future and one that could assist in exploring the agency versus apathy issue I touch on. I detect hints of concern about the latter, or perhaps powerlessness or resignation, in the way the commentator quoted above closes his piece: ‘… it seems the public has concluded that we may as well give this military intervention one final chance. There may be few protests on the streets. There is much sadness at the return of the fallen. There appears to be little confidence, however, that their efforts will ultimately prevail.’

This brings us back to the question of means and ends and whether the former justify the latter. The loss of human life has to be the highest price paid as part of the means in the war on terror. But this comment raises the question of whether, as this loss grows day by day, confidence in the ends being achieved is reciprocally

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20 Kampfner, ‘Why is our anti-war outrage muted at this Afghan folly?’.
21 It is interesting to note that in a campaign just announced to lower the voting age to 16, the think-tank Demos points to this area: ‘Being able to join the armed forces at 16 is just one example of an age-differentiated right that lends support to an argument for lowering the voting age to 16. The “Votes at 16” coalition states that some 46,600 16 and 17 year olds were serving in the armed forces as of April 2007. Of the first 100 British soldiers to be killed in the ongoing war in Iraq, at least six were too young to have ever cast a vote in a general election.’ See Richard Reeves and Thishani Nadesan, The new frontier: votes at 16 (London: Demos, April 2010), p. 10.
waning. Does such a possibility test the legitimacy of the policies and actions of the liberal states engaged in the war on terror? Are these states losing sight of the need, as part of maintaining their legitimacy, to keep their citizens actively aware of and engaged with their foreign policies and actions, to keep them close and empowered? Has that been a major failing in the war on terror that has longer-term implications for liberal international politics? Has enough attention been paid by liberal states to the human and other costs of the war on terror? Would greater engagement with citizens’ views on and concerns about these costs have guided liberal states’ actions more effectively? These and many more questions of this kind are generated by the ethical and political concerns surrounding this war, and would appear to be important for the future of liberal international politics.

Citizens’ lives: multicultural and gender issues

Multiculturalism and gender are two areas intrinsic to the politics and ethics of the war on terror, and both are involved in the blurring of domestic and foreign divides in relation to citizens and their everyday lives. Multiculturalism has been in the foreground of war on terror politics, especially in the UK, right from its beginnings in 2001, and has featured as part of the reflexivity referred to in the previous section about what kind of liberal society the UK is. Indeed, multicultural liberalism has been at stake in war on terror policies, foreign and domestic. The phenomenon of Islamist extremism and terrorism, and the associated problems of enemies within as well as without, have disrupted liberal individual ethics of equality of treatment. New anti-terror security regimes, environments of risk, and fears around developments such as racial or cultural profiling have been divisive in their targeting or perceived targeting of specific communities.

The civil and human rights campaigning organization Liberty has been a prominent protester on such matters:

Using racial or religious profiling to counter terror threats is not only unfair, it is also counter productive. Such profiling is discriminatory and an affront to human rights values. It runs the risk of alienating certain sections of society and threatening community cohesion. Aside from this, Liberty believes that such un-targeted policies are ineffective and can obscure those who are a real threat. Profiling of suspects should be based on intelligence and real suspicion, not skin colour, name or dress code. Whether on the street or at the terminal, suspicious behaviour is a sensible basis for enhanced checking by security professionals; race or religion is not.

It might be argued that in exposing a whole range of areas that could be considered to undermine liberal notions of multicultural community in the UK, the


war on terror has led to much deeper consideration of what kind of multicultural community the UK can be considered to be, past, present and future. Before 2001 multiculturalism was largely taken for granted in the UK; one of the side-effects of the war on terror is that there has been a much larger focus on it and an expanded debate, involving a whole host of thinkers and practitioners including academics and researchers, politicians, think-tanks and NGOs at all levels, security services and police.

As the war on terror has endured there has, perhaps not surprisingly, been an increasing emphasis on bottom-up rather than top-down perspectives, including on combating ‘radicalization’ and the threat of terrorism. Such developments have placed the understanding of the UK as a multicultural liberal community much higher on political agendas, and in consequence, it can be argued, have shifted debates about practice as much as theory more towards liberalism with multiculturalism as a key characteristic rather than some kind of add-on or afterthought. This may well turn out to be one of the major developments due to the war on terror that will continue to affect politics and ethics long after the war has ended. The new home front is now, and may be from now on, a multicultural home front. Individual as well as collective ethics in the setting of this new era of multicultural liberalism entail fresh forms of reflexivity about identity and association. In the heightened security framework of the war on terror this reflexivity has been substantially associated with many negative areas, such as racial profiling and identification of certain sections of the community as locations of potential threat. This has inevitably contributed to greater risks of prejudice and suspicion; but reactions to such risks, even in direct relation to the security issue itself, have produced new forms of critical understanding.

Such understanding often signals the importance of a deeper awareness of different communities, and the importance of distinguishing the differences within them, avoiding the tendency to take exceptional or specific actions as in any way necessarily illustrative of general qualities. It can be argued that these moves indicate a more subtle and sensitive approach to communities—a firmer commitment to look at them from the inside and not just from the outside, and to consider them in detail rather than in broad-brush terms. There have been a range of illustrations of this tendency: for example, a 2006 research report from Demos entitled Bringing it home: community-based approaches to counter-terrorism highlighted some of the practical implications of bottom-up approaches. And it is interesting to note the extent to which these suggest a revisiting of core liberal ethics, some

25 Radicalization is defined in the government’s revised CONTEST counterterrorism strategy as ‘the process by which people come to support violent extremism and, in some cases, join terrorist groups. Radicalisation has a range of causes (including perceptions of our foreign policy), varying from one country and one organisation to another.’ See HM Government, Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare: the United Kingdom’s strategy for countering international terrorism (London: TSO, March 2009), p. 11. See also the Home Office website on the UK counter-terrorism strategy: http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/counter-terrorism-strategy, accessed 28 May 2010. See points about distinguishing between ‘radicals’ and ‘violent extremists’ in Rachel Briggs, Catherine Fieschi and Hannah Lownsbrough, Bringing it home: community-based approaches to counter-terrorism (London: Demos, 2006).


27 Briggs et al., Bringing it home.
of which have already been referred to above: trust; transparency; accountability; engagement.

A community-based approach to counterterrorism must be underpinned by four principles. First, it must be locally based and recognize and respond to the differences within the Muslim community, which is far from homogeneous. Second, it needs to be rooted in an understanding of faith, without which it is easy for government and security forces to misread the signs within the community. Third, the government must make the policy-making process as transparent and accountable as possible, opening up decision-making processes and engaging on issues where there is political discontent. Only then will trust be forged between the government and Muslim communities. Fourth, and related, the government must get over its hang-ups about responding to the grievances of the Muslim community. In many instances, they are well founded and deserve to be recognized, but in others the government must be more confident about taking the debate out to the communities, rather than sulking in Whitehall.28

In critical debates about the government’s revised counterterrorist (CONTEST) strategy in 2009, the Guardian journalist Gary Younge touched on the failure to treat Muslim citizens as multidimensional and the tendency of the government to approach them as if their religion defined them. ‘It rarely speaks to them as tenants, parents, students or workers; it does not dwell on problems that they share with everyone else; it does not convene high profile task forces to look at how to improve their daily lives.’29 While these kinds of comments suggest that everyday multicultural citizenship may still be more a goal than a reality, they are part of extensive critical reactions demonstrating increased focus on it.

Gender issues in the war on terror have often been bound up with multicultural issues, but have in general occupied a less central position in debate. There is not space here to discuss this area comprehensively, merely to cover a few points to illustrate how gender is part of the blurring of divisions between domestic and foreign, inside and outside. From the start of the war on terror, women have been objectified in varied ways as part of its politics. It was quickly noted that women were being used as discursive political pawns early on in foreign policy pronouncements, with the positioning of the allied forces as coming to the rescue of Afghan and Iraqi women.30 Feminist perspectives stressed the deeply gendered and ‘orientalist’ politics in play: the fusing of gendered and racialized framings, allowing at one and the same time for the assertion of western hegemonic masculinity over eastern (Afghan and Iraqi) masculinities by displacing the latter

28 Briggs et al., Bringing it home, pp. 15–16. Important research has been undertaken on ‘suspect communities’ which links back to the Northern Ireland terrorism scenario as well as to the current war on terror. See the first findings of the ESRC-funded project led by Prof. Mary Hickman of London Metropolitan University, ‘A comparative study of the representations of “suspect” communities in multi-ethnic Britain and of their impact on Muslim and Irish communities’, http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/research-units/iset/projects/esrc-suspect-communities.cfm, accessed 28 May 2010. See also Paddy Hillyard, Suspect community (London: Pluto Press, 1993).
30 Gillian Youngs, ‘Feminist international relations’.
and positioning western males as the hero warriors to Afghan and Iraqi women.31 The longer the war on terror has endured, the more deeply this racialized gender politics becomes embedded—another area that might be argued to be affecting the nature of international politics more broadly.

Feminists have long criticized the objectification of women as carriers and markers of culture,32 and this has been a characteristic of the war on terror and the blurring of boundaries between foreign and domestic contexts. The niqab and burqa worn by Islamic women are key symbols, and recent attempts have been made in France and Belgium to ban their wearing in public.33 While security concerns about faces being concealed are raised, there are also major struggles here between freedom of religious, cultural, individual expression and secularism. Feminist perspectives on these concerns and struggles would include consideration of the extent to which women’s agency or influence is evident within them, or in contrast the extent to which this agency is subsumed within patriarchal systems dominated by male influence. There is a strong reminder here of how women’s everyday lives and citizenship across the board remain to a large extent controlled by male-dominated structures, institutions and cultural norms (whether we are talking in secular or religious terms). While this does not in any way rule out women’s agency, it does need to be taken into account when considering the nature of that agency and ways in which it might be compromised, distorted or blocked in certain circumstances. Perhaps the larger point to be stressed in relation to international politics more broadly is the pervasiveness of objectified references to issues related to women in patriarchal processes, often with far too little attention paid to women’s voices and, even more important, their priorities. The ethical challenges of the war on terror include multiple fresh reminders of persistent gender equality gaps.

**Concluding thoughts on the new home front, the war on terror and international politics**

How many of us realized in the early days of the war on terror that it would go on as long as it has; produce new security and surveillance cultures that would threaten the very liberal way of life they sought to defend; lead to a mounting death toll and regular public tributes to the bodies of dead service personnel arriving home; test the UK’s brand of multiculturalism and demand much greater political awareness of and engagement with it; and make a range of gender issues prominent in mainstream politics? The war on terror has brought much that could barely have been anticipated, and this has been the focus of much of the discussion in this

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article. The idea of the new home front adopted here is interesting because it takes us into the past as well as helping us to think about the present. The implication of many of the points set out here is that while they may be specifically related to the war on terror they may have relevance more broadly to the future character of liberal international politics. Thanks to the new media, ‘over there’ will never be as far away in real terms as it was in the past, owing to the sociospatial realm of virtual online interactivity that is increasingly as much a context for politics as the familiar geospatial physical world. In this regard, as in others covered here, there is a growing role for horizontal (bottom-up) influences in contrast to vertical (top-down) ones. This is a factor shaping the ethical environment for contemporary politics, which in all its forms is likely to be called to account and engaged increasingly in horizontal terms in the future. And while the end of the war on terror may not yet be definitively in sight, there are already signs that it could have unexpected lasting effects.