



**Alex Lubin, *Never-Ending War on Terror* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021).**

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The roots of the War on Terror (WoT) can be traced back to the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States (US). The aftermath the counterterrorism policy of the US administration fails to provide a legal framework of conducting military operations and fails to outline a timeline about when such a war would end. Alex Lubin, Professor of African

American Studies at Penn State University, in his book, 'Never-Ending War on Terror', has tried to deconstruct the US strategy and objectives behind the WoT. Lubin believes that the WoT has been nothing more than an attempt at continuity of American exceptionalism and its policy of legalising extrajudicial incarceration and assassination of so-called terrorists. Moreover, it is argued in the book that WoT was not only a kinetic conflict but launched with the purpose of cultural transformation and expansion of US national security. In short, the author has tried to unveil historical myths about American national and imperial identity and how American political elite have manipulated the term to form narratives to renew the country's imperialist designs, especially after the end of the Cold War.

The book can be divided into five primary themes. First, it identifies how 9/11 was used to infuse hatred against the perpetrators of the attacks. Second, it focuses on explaining the concept of homeland security, redefining norms of the privacy of US citizens, and the misuse of executive power within the US under section 15 of the 'US Patriot Act' (p. 57). Third, it discusses the human rights violations during the WoT in the light of the Geneva Convention and condemns the legitimisation of torture by the US administration. Fourth, it discusses the role of media in promotion of American nationalism. Fifth, the book also highlights the use of drones for extrajudicial killings as another change in liberal values under the Obama Administration. Lubin criticises the alteration of 'American political culture' by the last three administrations and notes that 'The United States has the right to kill without legal restraint whomever it chooses in the name of fighting terrorism' (p. 108).

In short, the main argument put forth in the book is that the US counterterrorism policy has proved contrary to its normative and liberal framework as the 9/11 attacks have provided American political elite the opportunity to justify and hide their illegitimate actions under the cover of the WoT. In this regard, the media played a complementary role by promoting American nationalism as well as the righteousness of a military response.

Lubin believes that the WoT is couched in several mistruths that have justified its continuation. Some of these mistruths include targeting Iraq as the home for Weapons of Mass Destruction, (WMDs) as well as connections that were alleged between the Saddam Hussein regime and the 9/11 attacks, as well as the mistruths that were used to justify continued conflict in Afghanistan (pp. 3-4). In short, throughout his book, the author has focused on the contradictions in the American norms and notions that were and are forced upon other nation-states to wage war.

One of the main strengths of this book is that it provides an unbiased and critical overview of how the US perpetuated opaque practices through coercion or persuasion and in so doing has caused irreparable damage to values like liberty and freedom of

expression which are touted as the foundation of the country's democracy. On the other hand, despite critiquing the narrative of WoT, the author is unable to fully dissect this apparent US agenda of 'never-ending wars' and the legality of such wars from an international humanitarian point of view. Moreover, the book only discusses the timeline of events after 9/11 referring to it as the basic cause behind the global WoT. What is missing is how this 9/11 narrative, promoted by the US, has also provided other countries with the option to achieve their objectives while playing within its realm. The ambiguity in explaining the narrative of this war has created complex challenges from a security perspective since there is now no universally accepted definition of 'terrorism.' Moreover, promotion of such a narrative itself has been harmful not just for American society as it has further strengthened radicalisation, polarisation, and used to justify acts of state violence (p. 29), but also countries in every part of the world.

This book is an insightful read for undergraduates and professionals who want to understand the foundations of the WoT. It can be a good addition in think tanks and university libraries to help students and academics deconstruct the implicit motives behind this war. This book is also recommended for media personnel to understand the power of media in promoting (hyper)nationalism and constructing/manipulating peoples' belief system.