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**Sarah Bania-Dobyns on New Terror, New Wars by Paul Gilbert.
Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003. 176pp.**

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New Terror, New Wars by Paul Gilbert contributes to the cross-section of literature that is concerned with just war, human rights and the “War on Terror.” It is intended for the reader who wishes to understand how, as Gilbert puts it, the “conditions” and “conduct” of war are changing so that we can think about both what the “War on Terror” is about, as well as what might bring it to an end. In his introduction, he argues that old wars are those that take place between states seeking to protect state interests. New wars, on the other hand, are fought between and on behalf of peoples seeking to protect their identities. Thus, the old wars are fought between combatants, while in the new wars all members of an identity group may be implicated.

By referring to wars fought between and on behalf of peoples, Gilbert emphasizes that parties to new wars may be identity groups that have political claims. This focus on how identity is deployed as a source of authority in the new wars becomes Gilbert’s common thread that runs through the rest of the book. Each chapter picks up this thread from a different perspective: in chapters two, three and four (“The Right of Self Defence,” “Myths of Identity,” and “Hatred and Revenge”) the focus is on the different facets of identity and how these constitute legitimate sources of authority in the new wars. For example, in “The Right of Self Defence,” Gilbert argues that sub-state groups can claim a right of self defense when a state threatens the lives, livelihoods and liberty of its own citizens (26).

The second half of the book (chapter five, “The Conduct of War,” and chapter six, “Righting the Wrongs of War”) turns to the question of how to handle conduct in the new wars, given political claims based on identity. Gilbert’s question in “The Conduct of War” is how can statesmen lead participants in the new wars toward moderate, as opposed to extremist, behavior? This question loosely informs the following two chapters. “Righting the Wrongs of War,” for example, focuses particularly on the question of whether the scale and type of intervention has been the appropriate response to the new wars. Chapter 7, “Restoring Peace,” is Gilbert’s attempt to draw some speculative conclusions about how to move on from the “War on Terror.”

For a relatively short book, Gilbert’s goals are quite ambitious. The questions he takes on, regarding both the changing conduct and conditions of the new wars, as well as how to move on from the “War on Terror,” do not have easy answers. More difficult still is the lack of consensus about whether there are “new wars” vs. “old wars,” so that Gilbert also has the task of identifying the new wars as a distinct phenomenon. While his definition of new wars seems to suggest that identity can be a source of political authority, and it can be deployed as such under the auspices of some other form of organization besides the state, his concluding statement in the introduction eludes this claim: “It is identity politics itself which leads the participants in new wars to suppose that terrorist acts...are justifiable, since it is only from the perspective of a politics of role that they are not” (19).

The reader therefore expects Gilbert to explain how a “politics of role” ought to be deployed in the conditions and conduct of wars rather than identity politics. Yet, though he alludes to both of these concepts frequently in the chapters that follow, the introduction does not provide the sufficient groundwork for the concept of role to be central to his argument. He states that in a “politics of role” *what* one is defines how one should act, while under a “politics of identity” *who* one is defines how one should act (11). This is reasonably clear, but it becomes murky when he

suggests that roles are constrained by international norms which are “transcultural” (12-13). While he only implicitly claims that identities are constrained by norms, he does not explicitly say that they are. This seems strange. Why do “transcultural” international norms constrain roles but not identities? Are there not cultural differences regarding which roles matter? Gilbert concludes his discussion by contrasting the politics of identity and role and arguing that deviating from international norms is a departure from the politics of role, and it is on these grounds that he suggests that a politics of identity may be filling in the gap (14).

Is a “politics of identity” becoming more significant than a “politics of role” in the conditions and conduct of war? It is a significant question, but not one that Gilbert answers for us. His is a thoughtful book which opens up a number of paths for further inquiry. It is worth considering if only to reflect upon the direction of the research agenda for human rights and the “War on Terror.”

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