

COSTS OF WAR



An elderly Iraqi woman carries dishes past old houses in a formerly Jewish area of central Baghdad, Iraq, Monday, Aug. 25, 2008. (AP Photo/Karim Kadim)

225,000 Killed, \$3.2 - 4 Trillion

The President of the United States has told the American people and the rest of the world that even as the U.S. withdraws some troops from Afghanistan and continues to withdraw from Iraq, the wars will continue for some years. The debate over why each war was begun and whether either or both should have been fought continues.

What we do know, without debate, is that the wars begun ten years ago have been tremendously painful for millions of people in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan, and the United States, and economically costly as well. Each additional month and year of war will add to that toll. To date, however, there has been no comprehensive accounting of the costs of the United States' wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan. The goal of the Costs of War project has been to outline a broad understanding of the domestic and international costs and consequences of those wars. The Eisenhower Research Project based at Brown University assembled a team that includes economists, anthropologists, political scientists, legal experts, and a physician to do this analysis.

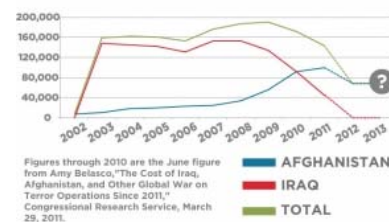
We asked:

- What have been the wars' costs in human and economic terms?
- How have these wars changed the social and political landscape of the United States and the countries where the wars have been waged?
- What will be the long term legacy of these conflicts for veterans?
- What is the long term economic effect of these wars likely to be?
- Were and are there alternative less costly and more effective ways to prevent further terror attacks?

Some of the project's findings:

- While we know how many US soldiers have died in the wars (just over 6000), what is startling is what we *don't* know about the levels of injury and illness in those who have returned from the wars. New disability claims continue to pour into the VA, with 550,000 just through last fall. Many deaths and injuries among US contractors have not been identified.
- At least 137,000 civilians have died and more will die in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan as a result of the fighting at the hands of all parties to the conflict.
- The armed conflict in Pakistan, which the U.S. helps the Pakistani military fight by funding, equipping and training them, has taken as many lives as the conflict in neighboring Afghanistan.
- Putting together the conservative numbers of war dead, in uniform and out, brings the total to 225,000.
- Millions of people have been displaced indefinitely and are living in grossly inadequate conditions. The current number of war refugees and displaced persons -- 7,800,000 -- is equivalent to all of the people of Connecticut and Kentucky fleeing their homes.
- The wars have been accompanied by erosions in civil liberties at home and human rights violations abroad.

US Troop Levels in Afghanistan and Iraq



- The human and economic costs of these wars will continue for decades, some costs not peaking until mid-century. Many of the wars' costs are invisible to Americans, buried in a variety of budgets, and so have not been counted or assessed. For example, while most people think the Pentagon war appropriations are equivalent to the wars' budgetary costs, the true numbers are twice that, and the full economic cost of the wars much larger yet. Conservatively estimated, the war bills already paid and obligated to be paid are \$3.2 trillion in constant dollars. A more reasonable estimate puts the number at nearly \$4 trillion.
- As with former US wars, the costs of paying for veterans' care into the future will be a sizable portion of the full costs of the war.
- The ripple effects on the U.S. economy have also been significant, including job loss and interest rate increases, and those effects have been underappreciated.
- While it was promised that the US invasions would bring democracy to both countries, Afghanistan and Iraq, both continue to rank low in global rankings of political freedom, with warlords continuing to hold power in Afghanistan with US support, and Iraqi communities more segregated today than before by gender and ethnicity as a result of the war.
- Serious and compelling alternatives to war were scarcely considered in the aftermath of 9/11 or in the discussion about war against Iraq. Some of those alternatives are still available to the U.S.

There are many costs of these wars that we have not yet been able to quantify and assess. With our limited resources, we focused on U.S. spending, U.S. and allied deaths, and the human toll in the major war zones, Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan. There is still much more to know and understand about how all those affected by the wars have had their health, economies, and communities altered by the decade of war, and what solutions exist for the problems they face as a result of the wars' destruction.

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