

# The Price of War

ESTIMATED U.S. COST: \$4 TRILLION BY SUSAN SELIGSON

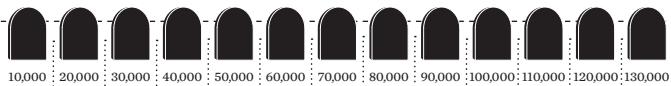
HEADS TOGETHER

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The Department of Defense has been the country's single largest consumer of fuel, using about

At least



**137,000 civilians**

have been killed in Afghanistan and Iraq.

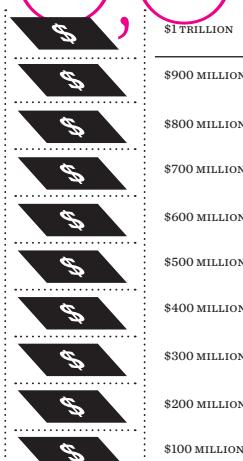


4,600,000,000 gallons of fuel each year.

*If war spending continues as forecast, the country can expect to have paid*

**\$1 trillion in interest**

*by 2020.*



Bombing in Afghanistan and deforestation have threatened an important migratory thoroughfare for birds leading through this area. The number of birds now flying this route has **DROPPED BY 85 PERCENT.**

CYDNEY SCOTT



NETA CRAWFORD HOPES to deepen the public's understanding of the staggering ripple effects—human, economic, and environmental—of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and the counterinsurgency efforts in Pakistan. The College of Arts & Sciences professor of political science is the coauthor of a far-reaching study that pegs the cost of these wars to the United States at \$4 trillion.

Launched under the auspices of the Eisenhower Institute at Gettysburg College, a center for leadership and public policy, the Costs of War study took more than a year to complete. Crawford, who directed the study with Catherine Lutz, a Brown University professor of anthropology and inter-

national studies, says it pooled the efforts of economists, anthropologists, lawyers, and political scientists. Crawford's scholarship focused on the civilian death toll, which stands at 137,000. The report puts the total war deaths of those in and out of uniform at 225,000, and notes that the conflict in Pakistan has cost as many lives as that in Afghanistan. Since September 11, 2001, the wars have claimed the lives of 6,000 U.S. troops and

## » More than 550,000 veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars have filed disability claims.

2,300 contractors, and the number of displaced Afghans and Iraqis is eight million.

In calculating war costs, the study attempted to go where other studies had not and included estimates of federally funded domestic jobs lost to war spending and data reflecting the post-9/11 toll on Americans' privacy. For example, a 2006 audit of the FBI found that the agency had collected communications of more than 3,000 people without satisfying even the minimal certification requirements under the USA Patriot Act.

The report even charts the conflicts' effects on bird migrations and endangered species. One example: U.S. military bases have become lucrative markets for the skins of the exotic snow leopard, peddled by impoverished Afghans despite a 2002 hunting ban on the rare animals.

War bills already paid and obligated to be paid amount to at least \$3.2 trillion in constant dollars, and the report concludes that \$4 trillion is "a more reasonable" overall estimate. The researchers worked to arrive at verifiable conservative estimates of the wars' costs in human and economic terms, as well as long-term economic effects that range from lost wages to medical care to veterans' benefits to homeland security expenditures. As of last fall, the number of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans filing new disability claims surpassed 550,000.

Less obvious is the environmental toll of the wars, from the dangerous level of toxic dust caused by military base garbage-burning pits to deforestation to fuel consumption.

The report is also startling for its mention of costs that could not be counted, including so-called condolence payments to the survivors of civilians killed in U.S. operations, the costs of CIA-run Predator and Reaper drone surveillance and strike programs in Pakistan, and the portion of the national intelligence budget devoted to the wars. While the director of na-

tional intelligence releases its top-line figure—the 2011 request was for \$55 million—the department does not disclose any budget details, claiming national security concerns.

Crawford and Lutz go beyond damage assessment, offering recommendations for greater transparency and accountability, as well as alternatives to violent conflict. Even in the face of terrorism, war isn't the only answer, the authors say, citing a Rand Corporation report comparing 268 groups using terror tactics worldwide from 1968 to 2006. Of these, 40 percent were eliminated through intelligence and policing methods, 43 percent ended their violence as a result of political accommodation, and 10 percent ceased violent activities because they had achieved their objectives. Only 7 percent of the groups were defeated militarily.

*Bostonia* spoke with Crawford, editor of *Soviet Military Aircraft* and author of *Argument and Change in World Politics: Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention*, about the challenges presented by the study, its most surprising findings, and the impact she hopes it will have on decision makers.

### BOSTONIA: How did the Costs of War study come about?

*Crawford:* Some scholars began the Eisenhower research project; the mission is to call attention to the role of the military

and the effect of taking resources and putting them into the military from other places. Eisenhower spoke of this. We decided the study would commemorate the 50th anniversary of his presidential farewell speech, in which he acknowledged that another war could destroy civilization.

### What are some of the ripple effects of wars that can't be counted?

These wars have been financed mostly by borrowing, so they are like no other war in U.S. history. In every other war we increased taxes, sold war bonds—we paid for those wars in relatively short order. But these wars began in a time when tax cuts just went into effect. By borrowing to pay for them, we have not only an increased deficit, but we have to pay interest. If you pay interest for 5, 10, 20, and more years, it adds up to a sum so enormous we didn't include it. We put it off to the side because it would overwhelm every other thing. And we didn't include other ripple effects. We know, for example, that veterans will have to replace prosthetic devices for limbs; there's an ongoing cost we didn't include. And we didn't look at costs incurred by the Red Cross, or NGOs, or hospitals.

### In collecting all the data, what costs surprised you?

One of the things is how this war comes home in the higher interest rates that you and I might pay to buy a house. There are significant macroeconomic effects.

### Tell us about calculating the civilian toll in these conflicts.

I wrote the sections about civilian killings, and what I wanted to do is describe how it is that people not only die when they're bombed, but they die because infrastructure is destroyed or because they can't get health care or vaccinations as a result of that destruction. In political science we call this structural violence. There's been some effort to quantify this, but you need much more detailed work on conditions prior to war, especially in Afghanistan and Pakistan. One of the things I was trying to get across was that when the fighting stops, the dying continues, and the dying is this indirect debt. Also, when you kill innocent civilians, it creates resistance

and promotes insurgency, fueling a semicovert war.

#### Was there debate about including Pakistan in the study?

I had argued from the beginning that we should include it, and everyone agreed. My reasoning was that the United States thinks of Pakistan as essential for winning in Afghanistan, channeling most of its war material through Pakistan, and U.S. military aid to Pakistan has increased. Pakistan is crucial to thinking about Afghanistan, but it is a war zone in its own right. In Afghanistan, the United States went in with boots on the ground, but in Pakistan it's attempting to skip that phase, and we have so-called Vietnamization, or indigenization, of that fight. We have military trainers, U.S. equipment, and of course the drone strikes, a novel and rarely spoken about feature of the war.

#### Would you call your conclusion that these wars cost as much as \$4 trillion a conservative estimate?

This could be a high estimate, but we're pretty confident that what we have is the right order of magnitude. We didn't even include, for example, the new G.I. Bill.

#### How does the use of contractors affect war costs?

We had mercenaries in the past, but this use of contractors is beyond that. We have people cooking meals where army privates used to do it, and often these people are paid a greater amount. And there's a human cost. The people in uniform don't get a rest from being on patrol or driving trucks, so in the past, when soldiers went to peel potatoes because sergeants saw that they were fatigued, they had that outlet, and now they don't.

#### Will the study be updated?

The website will be revised, and we hope to get resources to cover the areas of wars that we couldn't research appropriately. There are things we still want to know about: for example, we need to know more about the effects of war on gender and gender roles, we need much more research on economic impact, we want to know more about environmental impact and the economic costs of war to U.S. allies. We have a lot of questions.

## DIGEST | BU research in brief

### MEDICATION USE BY PREGNANT WOMEN CLIMBS

*Antidepressants, over-the-counter drugs top list in BU report*



Most pregnant women today know that using tobacco and drinking alcohol is risky to their fetus, and they avoid these substances. But researchers at BU's Slone Epidemiology Center have found that an increasing number of pregnant women are taking both over-the-counter and prescription drugs. Their study, published in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, also found that medication use varied considerably by women's socioeconomic status, age, ethnicity, and where they lived, with older and more educated women more likely to use medication.

Slone Center director and study lead investigator Allen Mitchell, a School of Public Health professor of epidemiology and a School of Medicine professor of pediatrics, says the study raises concerns that pregnant women may unknowingly take medication that could pose a risk to the fetus or might be discouraged from taking medically useful medications that are relatively safe. Mitchell says the study strongly suggests that more information is needed on the risks and safety of the vast majority of commonly used medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.

Done in collaboration with the federal Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention and the Harvard School of Public Health, the research analyzed 35 years of interviews with 32,700 women who gave birth, to both infants with birth defects and infants without birth defects, and identified their use of medications during pregnancy. The researchers found that in 2008, nearly half the women interviewed reported taking at least one prescription medication during their first trimester, a 60 percent increase in the more than three decades, and 70 to 80 percent were taking over-the-counter medications.

In the 35 years since the study began, the use of four or more medications during the first trimester tripled, an increase attributable in part to the dramatic rise of SSRI (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor) antidepressants such as Prozac. SUSAN SELIGSON

### COMBAT STRESS: WOMEN AS RESILIENT AS MEN

*BU study is the first of its kind*



War is hell, but women soldiers may be no more vulnerable to its stresses than men. That's the conclusion of a study of veterans returning from the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, led by the School of Medicine.

The researchers, whose findings differ from broader studies suggesting females have a heightened vulnerability to trauma,

surveyed 340 women and 252 men who had returned from deployment within the previous year, quizzing them about any symptoms of depression, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other mental health impairment.

"While women are still officially barred from direct ground combat positions in the U.S. military, they serve in a variety of positions that put them at risk for combat exposure," write the researchers in their paper, which appeared online in the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*. "Women's risk for combat is compounded by the enemy's increased use of guerrilla warfare tactics in recent wars. As of 2009, more than 750 women had been wounded or killed in action" during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, which includes the Afghanistan war and some other anti-terrorism efforts.

"Regardless of the cause," the study concludes, "these findings have substantial implications for military policy, as they call into question the commonly held belief that women may be more vulnerable to the negative effects of combat exposure than men." A congressionally created commission has recommended ending the ban on women in combat.

Dawne Vogt, a MED associate professor of psychiatry and a researcher at the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in the VA Boston Healthcare System, was the study's lead author; among the study coauthors are School of Public Health researchers Mark Glickman, Susan Eisen, Rani Elwy, and Mari-Lynn Draionni. RICH BARLOW