
IRAQ WAR AMONG WORLD'S WORST EVENTS

EVER MORE SHOCKED, NEVER YET AWED



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ColdType
e-reader

**David Swanson will be speaking on this topic
in Washington, D.C., on Monday, March 18, 2013**

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SUMMARY

At 10 years since the launch of Operation Iraqi Liberation (to use the original name with the appropriate acronym, OIL) and over 22 years since Operation Desert Storm, there is little evidence that any significant number of people in the United States have a realistic idea of what our government has done to the people of Iraq, or of how these actions compare to other horrors of world history. A majority of Americans believe the war since 2003 has hurt the United States but benefitted Iraq. A plurality of Americans believe, not only that Iraqis should be grateful, but that Iraqis are in fact grateful.

A number of U.S. academics have advanced the dubious claim that war making is declining around the world. Misinterpreting what has happened in Iraq is central to their argument. As documented below, by the most scientifically respected measures available, Iraq lost 1.4 million lives as a result of OIL, saw 4.2 million additional people injured, and 4.5 million people become refugees. The 1.4 million dead was 5% of the population. That compares to 2.5% lost in the U.S. Civil War, or 3 to 4% in Japan in World War II, 1% in France and Italy in World War II, less than 1% in the U.K. and 0.3% in the United States in World War II. The 1.4 million dead is higher as an absolute number as well as a percentage of population than these other horrific losses. U.S. deaths in Iraq since 2003 have been 0.3% of the dead, even if they've taken up the vast majority of the news coverage, preventing U.S. news consumers from understanding the extent of Iraqi suffering.

In a very American parallel, the U.S. government has only

been willing to value the life of an Iraqi at that same 0.3% of the financial value it assigns to the life of a U.S. citizen.¹

The 2003 invasion included 29,200 air strikes, followed by another 3,900 over the next eight years. The U.S. military targeted civilians, journalists, hospitals, and ambulances. It also made use of what some might call “weapons of mass destruction,” using cluster bombs, white phosphorous, depleted uranium, and a new kind of napalm in densely settled urban areas.

Birth defects, cancer rates, and infant mortality are through the roof. Water supplies, sewage treatment plants, hospitals, bridges, and electricity supplies have been devastated, and not repaired. Healthcare and nutrition and education are nothing like they were before the war. And we should remember that healthcare and nutrition had already deteriorated during years of economic warfare waged through the most comprehensive economic sanctions ever imposed in modern history.

Money spent by the United States to “reconstruct” Iraq was always less than 10% of what was being spent adding to the damage, and most of it was never actually put to any useful purpose. At least a third was spent on “security,” while much of the rest was spent on corruption in the U.S. military and its contractors.

The educated who might have best helped rebuild Iraq fled the country. Iraq had the best universities in Western Asia in the early 1990s, and now leads in illiteracy, with the population of teachers in Baghdad reduced by 80%.

For years, the occupying forces broke the society of Iraq down, encouraging ethnic and sectarian division and violence,

resulting in a segregated country and the repression of rights that Iraqis used to enjoy, even under Saddam Hussein's brutal police state.

While the dramatic escalation of violence that for several years was predicted would accompany any U.S. withdrawal did not materialize, Iraq is not at peace. The war destabilized Iraq internally, created regional tensions, and -- of course -- generated widespread resentment for the United States. That was the opposite result of the stated one of making the United States safer.

If the United States had taken five trillion dollars, and -- instead of spending it destroying Iraq -- had chosen to do good with it, at home or abroad, just imagine the possibilities. The United Nations thinks \$30 billion a year would end world hunger. For \$5 trillion, why not end world hunger for 167 years? The lives not saved are even more than the lives taken away by war spending.

A sanitized version of the war and how it started is now in many of our school text books. It is not too late for us to correct the record, or to make reparations. We can better work for an actual reduction in war making and the prevention of new wars, if we accurately understand what past wars have involved.

UNKNOWN KNOWNS: What Americans Don't Know About Iraq

The destruction of infrastructure in Baghdad by U.S. bombing during the Gulf War was followed relatively quickly by repairs yet to be seen since the bombing of 2003. But the 1991 bombing was also followed by (and preceded by) sanctions. Then-U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright famously said that she believed a half million young children killed by sanctions was “worth it.” I spoke with Albright in 2012 and asked her about that statement. She said she had made a mistake in saying it. She did not say she had made a mistake in believing it or acting on it. I asked her if similar sanctions now being imposed on Iran were “worth it,” and she said yes, they were.²

Worth what? That's never very clear.

It's worth noting that the 1.4 million estimated deaths since March 20, 2003, are deaths in excess of the horribly high death rates under the sanctions that would have continued had the war not been launched.

In 1922, Winston Churchill called Iraq, which his troops then occupied, an “ungrateful volcano.” A web search of U.S. media today and in recent years finds abundant discussion of Iraq's gratitude or ingratitude. A plurality of 41% in the U.S. told a CBS News poll in August 2010 that Iraqis were in fact grateful for the U.S. invasion. A majority of those polled in the U.S. told Gallup that same month that Iraq was better off because of the U.S. invasion. That such a conversation, and such poll results, are possible suggests a high level of ignorance of what has happened in Iraq during the past decade.

There is very little polling of the U.S. public concerning our beliefs about conditions in Iraq, and extremely few polls have surveyed Americans' beliefs about Iraqi beliefs, including whether Iraqis supported the occupation. Pollsters usually will not poll on topics not extensively covered by U.S. corporate media. Providers and consumers of U.S. news do not know what has been done to Iraq, and want -- like former Secretary of So-Called "Defense" Donald Rumsfeld -- to not know what they do not know. There is no mass movement demanding to be informed of what has been done or to make reparations for it.

Pollsters have asked Americans whether the war was "worth it" or, in some cases, clarifying the meaning, whether the war was "worth the loss of American lives and other costs." Consistently, a strong majority in the U.S. has said that the war was not "worth it." Consistently, a majority "opposed" the war from at least 2004 until the end of polling in 2011. Consistently a majority favored ending the war within a year for several years running. This was even true in polls of U.S. troops in Iraq.³

According to CNN in December 2011, 57% of Americans believed, accurately of course, that the Bush administration deliberately misled the public about Iraqi weapons. This is a very helpful development, but it is no solid indication of a thorough understanding that all wars are based on lies, even though the lies are sometimes more competently told than they were in this instance.⁴ Nor is it an indication of any willingness to see participation in war, even in a disapproved of war, as wrong in any way. CNN and other pollsters got positive results of around 96% when they asked Americans if they were proud of U.S. troops so-called "serving" in Iraq. An explanation of how

a bad war can be a “service” may begin with the idea that the service is for the occupied nation. In December 2011, 52% of those polled in the U.S. told CNN they believed the war had had a negative effect on the United States, but only 28% said they believed the war had had negative results for Iraq. The war, in the view of some in the United States, was a service to the Iraqis. These Americans’ opposition to the war was opposition to providing that service.

But the meaning of whether the war was “worth it” in U.S. opinion polls seems to have virtually nothing to do with the impact on the people of Iraq, despite the pretended goal of “spreading democracy” having served for a period as a replacement justification for a war begun with the pretended goal of protecting the United States from a nonexistent threat. It remains common practice in U.S. corporate news outlets to list casualties of Operation Iraqi Liberation and include only U.S. casualties. Even academics like Steven Pinker do this in order to strengthen the dubious claim that war casualties are declining globally and historically, and in order to blame deaths under occupations on civil war and on the culture of the occupied people.⁵ (More on that below.) It remains a common pretense in U.S. commentary that the deadliest U.S. war ever was the U.S. Civil War in which, it is commonly believed, some 600,000 died.⁶

A February 2007 Associated Press poll was the only one during the past decade to ask Americans how many Iraqis had been killed in the war since 2003. Respondents, who knew almost exactly that 3,000 U.S. troops had died, guessed 9,890 (that was the median response) for the number of Iraqi deaths.⁷

Some Americans know that number to be wrong. Some have

a good idea of roughly how wrong it is. Some have learned a great deal more about the suffering inflicted on Iraq this past decade and longer. These better informed Americans are not awed by militarism, but they are not always shocked by it either. Some of us are at times more interested in being wise and knowing than in being shocked. I believe it's important that we remain shocked, but not awed, by Shock and Awe and what followed from it. Some of the following information may help in that regard.



THE DAMAGE

MEASURING DEATHS: How Many People Has the United States Killed in Iraq?

The damage done by a war is of infinite variety, often impossible to quantify. Sometimes it is utterly pointless to try to compare to other wars or disasters. There are deaths, injuries, mental injuries, delayed deaths, birth defects, environmental damage, infrastructure damage, economic damage, damage to a cultural heritage and artistic treasures, damage to a culture and to its politics, hatreds created and exacerbated, refugee crises, generations raised in violence and animosity, precedents set, the rule of law derailed. Damage is done to the occupiers as well as to the occupied. Even

powerful nations that imagine they are occupying poor nations far away to protect their own rights at home, nonetheless see their rights eroded under the excuse of a wartime emergency. The stage is set, in many wars, for other wars to come. And the stage is dismantled on which peaceful life-saving projects might have been enacted rather than war.

The damage is immeasurable, and yet some attempt must be made to measure it. The obvious place to start is with the death count. The U.S. military used to announce enemy death counts as a sign of progress in wars, overstating them to increase the appearance of victory. Now the U.S. military usually keeps a secret death count, and undercounts to minimize the appearance of brutality, but refuses to release the count or even to acknowledge keeping it until independent researchers announce much higher counts. This policy shift from counting deaths as a positive indicator to not counting them may at first appear a sign of progress, until one thinks about it for a moment. If the United States government placed any value on the lives of those living in occupied nations, it would count the deaths accurately and publicly in order to ensure that the harm being done was being outweighed by some good being done through the war. The value the U.S. government places on foreign lives remains today exactly what it was during the war on Vietnam: zero. This fact is made painfully clear, as well, in current U.S. debates over drone kill policies, all of which focus on the question of where and when it is legal for a president to murder a U.S. citizen with a drone. Concern over the killing of non-Americans is almost nonexistent in the White House, Congress, and the U.S. media cartel.

Of course, when lives -- even foreign lives, are of propaganda value, the U.S. government values them highly. David

Peterson pointed out in a communication to me: “The state-and-establishment-media nexus in the United States places a huge value of the deaths of non-U.S. citizens if their deaths serve a propagandistic interest in the same way that a U.S. citizen’s death would. The outstanding recent example of this was the death of Neda Agha-Soltan on the streets of Tehran in late June 2009: Tons of emotional coverage and outrage, and an endless stream of vitriol directed at the Iranian regime.

“When the U.S. state commits crimes in its official capacity, the victims have zero value, but when an officially designated enemy commits crimes (real or fabrications), its victims can be endowed with a huge value by the U.S. state-and-establishment-media nexus. But the relevant binary aspect at work here isn’t the distinction between foreigner and U.S. citizen; rather, it’s whether the perpetrator comes from ‘our’ side or the ‘enemy’ side. If ‘we’ commit the crime, it must be justified or at worst a ‘tragic error,’ but if an officially designated enemy commits the crime, the crime flows from the inherent evil of the enemy, and is depicted with the accompanying moral indignation.”⁸

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University found that between March 18, 2003, and June 2006, there were 654,965 excess deaths in Iraq, of which 601,027 were due to violence. Excess deaths means, in this case, deaths exceeding the already high death rate under sanctions. So, all else equal, avoiding the war would have saved 654,965 lives just in the first three-and-a-quarter years, but avoiding the war and ending the sanctions would have saved many more lives. Avoiding the war and ending the sanctions and investing some fraction of the money spent on the war in infrastructure, education, health, and sustainability, would have saved many more lives than that. And,

of course, violence was at a peak and far from ending (it hasn't ended yet) when this survey stopped in June 2006.

Mike Ferner used 24 million as the population of Iraq and calculated that a proportionate loss to the 654,965 Iraqis killed, adjusted for the U.S. population, would mean the killing of every person in Atlanta, Denver, Boston, Seattle, Milwaukee, Fort Worth, Baltimore, San Francisco, Dallas and Philadelphia. (In addition, Ferner calculated, every person in Vermont, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Nebraska, Nevada, Kansas, Mississippi, Iowa, Oregon, South Carolina, and Colorado would be wounded.)⁹

The British based Opinion Research Business found that between March 2003 and August 2007, there were 1,033,000 violent deaths of Iraqis in Iraq.

Experts on surveys of this sort have supported the conclusions of Johns Hopkins and of the Opinion Research Business as strenuously as the U.S. corporate media has hypocritically denounced them. A review of this debate is found in *Erasing Iraq: The Human Costs of Carnage* by Michael Otterman and Richard Hill with Paul Wilson.

Iraq Body Count has kept a tally of deaths reported in the Western media, openly admitting that this creates a dramatic undercount of actual total deaths. In an attempt to approximate very roughly the total deaths as the occupation dragged on and on, Just Foreign Policy continually added to the total reached by Johns Hopkins in June 2006, increasing it in proportion to the increase recorded by Iraq Body Count. Just Foreign Policy's total now stands at 1,455,590 excess deaths.

These deaths came on top of the deaths caused by the first Gulf War and the sanctions and bombings between the two wars. A U.S. Commerce Department demographer placed civilians deaths from the 1991 war at “13,000 [who] were killed directly by American and allied forces, and about 70,000 [who] died subsequently from war-related damage to medical facilities and supplies, the electric power grid, and the water system.”¹⁰ To this must be added some 20,000 non-civilian Iraqi dead. UNICEF, in agreement with other independent studies, estimated 500,000 excess deaths from sanctions for children under five.

Dr. Gideon Polya, who blogs at <http://globalbodycount.blogspot.com>, has used U.N. data to estimate avoidable or excessive deaths due to foreign occupations for nations around the world. He calculates that total avoidable mortality and under-5 infant mortality in Iraq have been 4.4 million and 2.1 million respectively from 1990 to 2009. Of these, he finds 2.5 million total violent and nonviolent excess deaths post-2003 invasion and 0.9 million post-invasion under-5 infant deaths. I can't verify these findings and will use the figure of 1,455,590 when considering excess deaths from Operation Iraqi Liberation. I mention Polya merely to suggest that the real count may be higher.

The killing has involved the virtual elimination of some minority groups in Iraq.¹¹ Iraqi Christians have been slaughtered and driven out. Mandaeans have been reduced from 40,000 to 5,000. Yazidis too, and Shabaks, as well as Iraqi-Palestinians have all been “cleansed”.

Also among the dead are 4,489 U.S. and smaller numbers of other Western troops, not counting private contractors, and not

counting those who have died from war injuries after leaving Iraq.

There have been and will long continue to be delayed deaths among Americans as well as Iraqis, including suicides and the deaths of those suffering the results of contact with depleted uranium, white phosphorous, napalm, and other poisons, as well as those encountering cluster bombs and other explosives.

Brown University's "Cost of War" Project garnered a fair amount of media attention this month by announcing that a new report had tallied 190,000 deaths, a significantly lower figure than 1.4 million.¹² But there was no new report, no new research. There was just a paper by Brown professor Neta Crawford from a year-and-a-half ago in which she picked and chose what numbers to use from other sources.¹³ She said she was choosing not to use the Johns Hopkins (a.k.a. *Lancet*) studies or the Opinion Research Bureau study because they had not been updated and had been criticized. She chose instead to use Iraq Body Count, even while quoting an MIT professor pointing out that IBC admits its tally is probably half the size of actual deaths. What IBC means is that it is aware it is missing huge numbers of deaths; it has no basis for knowing how many. Even doubling IBC data, which would have produced 215,000 as of the 2010 paper Crawford quotes, leaves out combatants, and leaves out indirect or nonviolent deaths caused by war, and even leaves out civilians we know to have been counted by the U.S. government thanks to WikiLeaks. Crawford admits that, even adding up all these numbers may give a very low count. "Iraqi officials at the Ministry of Health," she notes, "may have been systematically encouraged to under-report deaths. One person who works at the Baghdad central morgue

statistics office told National Public Radio that ‘By orders of the minister’s office, we cannot talk about the real numbers of deaths. This has been the case since 2004. . . . I would go home and look at the news. The minister would say 10 people got killed all over Iraq, while I had received in that day more than 50 dead bodies just in Baghdad. It’s always been like that -- they would say one thing, but the reality was much worse.’” And so, given all those concerns, Crawford chose to stand by Iraq Body Count. After all, it doesn’t get criticized.

INJURIES: How Many People Has the United States Wounded in Iraq?

Iraq Body Count estimates three people with injuries for every death. At that rate, 1.4 million deaths (thus far) would mean 4.2 million injured. That is a calculation that does not include every form of trauma or suffering; the Iraqi victims of mental trauma are almost certainly in the millions. Nor does the statistic include injuries to future generations in the form of birth defects -- which have become so common in Fallujah.

The U.S. military reports 4,489 deaths among its members and 32,220 wounded. That means over 7 wounded for every death. However, the Congressional Research Service reports 253,330 traumatic brain injuries to U.S. troops (most, but not all, in Iraq) between 2000 and 2012, and 129,731 cases of post traumatic stress disorder. Both of those figures are widely believed to be dramatic undercounts.¹⁴ A study by RAND in 2006 found that up through that point, with 1.64 million U.S. “service members” having been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, an estimated 300,000 suffered from PTSD or major depression, and that 320,000 experienced a probable TBI (traumatic brain injury).¹⁵

There are now over 2 million U.S. veterans of the 21st century wars on Afghanistan and Iraq. Advances in military training that conditions troops to mindlessly engage in actions that disturb them later, and advances in the medical treatment of injuries and body armor, may be factors in the apparently extreme ratio of injuries to deaths among the occupying forces.

REFUGEES: How Many People Has the United States Driven From Their Homes in Iraq?

Another measure of war damage that can be quantified and at least estimated is the number of refugees. Some 4.5 million Iraqis have become refugees since 2003, roughly half of them outside the nation of Iraq. Roughly half of the refugees are children.¹⁶ As many as 3 million Iraqis had been made refugees by the 1991 war. Operation Iraqi Liberation produced a greater exodus. Both were likely greater in absolute numbers than the Nakba, the Palestinian exodus of 1948. Of course, it is complicated to compare numbers across different sized populations and across time periods. But the sheer number of people harmed is one way to measure human suffering, if not geopolitical impact. The suffering of new Iraqi refugees is recounted in Ann Jones' *War Is Not Over When It's Over*, which includes this:

“There is more than one way to lose a husband. Illness, accident, assassination, murder, warfare. Rape is another. Many women lose their husbands to rape. How many thousands of Iraqi women and girls have been raped it is impossible to know; but rape is commonplace. Of 4,516 cases of sexual violence in Iraq reported to UNHRC in Jordan, women were the victims

in 4,233 cases; and for each reported case, there are countless others. . . . Iraqi men in exile have lost house, land, livelihood, status -- all that once identified them as men. But in Amman, Damascus, and Beirut, someone must make a living for the family. Someone must bring home some money. Women take on a double burden -- their husband's role as well as their own. As the family sinks deeper into poverty, and waiting becomes intolerable, men try to reclaim their sense of identity by reasserting control over their wives and children. Domestic violence sweeps through Iraqi refugee camps like cholera."

By the fourth anniversary of the invasion, the United States had admitted 463 Iraqi refugees. During one eight-month period in 1975 the United States took in 131,000 Vietnamese, and since the end of that war the United States has allowed in 900,000. Not admitting refugees and refusing to call them refugees, have no doubt contributed to U.S. public ignorance of their existence in the case of Iraq.

BOMBS: How Many Did the United States Drop on Iraq?

The practice of bombing civilians as a supposed means of winning wars began in World War I. The British claimed before, during, and after major air strikes on German civilians that such a practice had a dramatic impact on the morale of the enemy.¹⁷ No postwar surveys found any evidence to support that claim. Following the war, the British bombed Afghanistan, Egypt, India, Yemen, Somaliland, and Iraq.

The scale of these first bombings of Iraq, which went on for 10 years, can be understood from a few examples. On July 10,

1922, 19 planes were used to attack Rowanduz. They dropped 400 gallons of gasoline followed by incendiary and delayed bombs. Planes attacked for three more days. Over four days they dropped five tons of bombs on the town. On November 30 - December 1, 1923, British planes bombed Samawah. Forty planes dropped 25 tons of bombs plus 8,600 incendiary bombs and 15,000 rounds of ammunition. The town was completely destroyed. Reportedly 9,000 people were killed in the first 9 months of 10 years of bombing, and that figure is probably closer to the truth than current U.S. public belief that OIL killed 9,000. In 1924 the air force had to explain the slaughter it was engaged in to Parliament. Just as with the U.S. White House in February 2013, the Royal Air Force of 1924 produced a piece of nonsensical reasoning it called a “white paper.”

In 1935 - 1936, Italy bombed Ethiopia with conventional bombs, fire bombs, and chemical bombs. Winston Churchill had advocated using chemical bombs on Iraqis but been overruled. His preference for bombing German civilians in World War II was, however, satisfied. Germany had bombed Guernica in 1937. Japan bombed China beginning in 1938, using chemical bombs, and delayed bombs that did damage similar to today’s cluster bombs. World War II saw dramatically new levels of aerial attacks on civilians, including massive U.S. and British bombing of Germany, and U.S. fire bombing of Japan, as well as the first two uses of nuclear bombs on cities.

The mythical belief that brutal air strikes on civilians can cause a government so indifferent to its citizens as to be engaged in a war to halt that war predates the development of airplanes and may last as long as our species. In 1941 President Franklin Roosevelt urged Britain to bomb German towns to “break German morale.” Officials planning urban bombings in

World War II expected civilians to react with the sort of trauma experienced by soldiers. They predicted that herds of “gibbering lunatics” would emerge from the rubble. But bombing victims do not endure the hardship of having to kill. Nor do they endure the “wind of hate,” the hardship of having to face individuals who want to kill them specifically at close range. Bombing victims can be traumatized, but they can also be strengthened in their resolve against the enemy. Their government can also remain completely indifferent to their suffering or their opposition to continuing a war.

In 1996, Harlan Ullman and James P. Wade coined the phrase “shock and awe.” They believed that bombing the morale out of a nation had failed to work for decades because the bombing and other destruction hadn’t been intense enough.

The Shock and Awe campaign of 2003 began, appropriately enough, with an air strike on March 19, supposedly intended to kill Saddam Hussein but aimed at a location where he was not present, and -- appropriately enough -- missing the target aimed at. Attacks continued at a low level until 1700 UTC (Coordinated Universal Time) on March 21, when the main bombing campaign began with 1,700 air sorties. By April 15, 2003, according to the BBC, there had been 41,000 sorties, 15,500 strike sorties, and 27,000 bombs dropped.¹⁸ This was combined with a ground assault. A greater number of bombs had been dropped on Iraq, according to the BBC, in 1991: 120,000 sorties, 40,000 strike sorties, 265,000 bombs dropped. By April 30, 2003, T. Michael Moseley, Lt. Gen, USAF, reported 29,200 air strikes during the 2003 invasion of Iraq.¹⁹

Counting the numbers of bombs misses developments that have made bombs more deadly over the years. It does not miss

developments in accuracy, which are largely mythical. Nicolas J.S. Davies wrote recently:²⁰

“One of the world’s leading experts on this subject, Rob Hewson, the editor of the military journal *Jane’s Air Launched Weapons*, estimated that 20 to 25 percent of the 19,948 precision weapons used in the ‘shock and awe’ attack on Iraq in 2003 completely missed their targets. The other 9,251 bombs and missiles were not classified as ‘precision’ weapons in the first place, so that only about 56 percent of the total 29,199 ‘shock and awe’ weapons actually performed with ‘precision’ by the military’s own standards. And those standards define precision for most of these weapons only as striking within a 29 foot radius of the target.”

Add to those measurements of error the U.S. military’s very limited understanding of what it was targeting, and its great willingness -- indeed its intention -- to target civilians and infrastructure. A U.S. Air Force planning officer for Operation Desert Storm pointed out: “People say, ‘You didn’t recognize that it was going to have an effect on water or sewage.’ Well, what were we trying to do with sanctions -- help out the Iraqi people? No. What we were doing with the attacks on infrastructure was to accelerate the effect of the sanctions.”

Air strikes are the top killer in U.S. wars, and we have seen increases in air strikes accompanying reductions in occupying forces in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Davies explains the level of aerial assault in recent wars:

“The U.S. dropped 17,500 bombs during its invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. It conducted 29,200 air strikes during the invasion of Iraq in 2003. U.S. air forces conducted at least an-

other 3,900 air strikes in Iraq over the next eight years, before the Iraqi government finally negotiated the withdrawal of U.S. occupation forces. But that pales next to at least 38,100 U.S. air strikes in Afghanistan since 2002, a country already occupied by U.S. and NATO forces, with a government pledged by its U.S. overlords to bring peace and justice to its people.

“The Obama administration is responsible for at least 18,274 air strikes in Afghanistan since 2009, including at least 1,160 by pilotless drones. The U.S. conducted at least 116 air strikes in Iraq in 2009 and about 1,460 of NATO’s 7,700 strikes in Libya in 2011. While the U.S. military does not publish figures on ‘secret’ air and drone strikes in other countries, press reports detail a five-fold increase over Bush’s second term, with at least 303 strikes in Pakistan, 125 in Yemen and 16 in Somalia.

“Aside from the initial bombing of Afghanistan in 2001 and the ‘shock and awe’ bombing of Iraq in March and April 2003, the Obama administration has conducted more air strikes day-in day-out than the Bush administration. Bush’s roughly 24,000 air strikes in seven years from 2002 to 2008 amounted to an air strike about every 3 hours, while Obama’s 20,130 in four years add up to one every 1-3/4 hours.”

While Afghanistan has been hit with more bombs, they may have killed fewer people. More of the bombing has been rural rather than urban.

Another nation hit with more bombs was Vietnam. The United States dropped nearly 7 million tons of bombs on Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. That compares to 2.7 million tons dropped by the Allies in Europe in World War II, and 0.7 million tons dropped by the Allies in the Pacific in World War II.

And, remember, World War II involved the bombing of many different nations.

Indochina is the most bombed area on earth, and tens of millions of bombs remain unexploded there today. But the bombing doesn't tell the full story of aerial assault, which includes such deadly substances as Agent Orange and napalm.

WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION: Who Had and Used Them?

The horror of Operation Iraqi Liberation also included, and still includes, the death and destruction and disfigurement and birth-defects and immeasurable suffering created by weapons widely deemed unacceptable by most of the world.

When Congressman Dennis Kucinich introduced 35 articles of impeachment against President George W. Bush, he had selected them from a draft of about twice that many articles. One of the draft articles not utilized was this one:

“In his conduct while President of the United States, George W. Bush, in violation of his constitutional oath to faithfully execute the office of President of the United States and, to the best of his ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States, and in violation of his constitutional duty to take care that the laws be faithfully executed, has both personally and acting through his agents and subordinates, violated international and U.S. law by committing war crimes in Iraq.

“The president has served as the Commander in Chief of a

military that has, in the course of invading and occupying Iraq, targeted civilians, journalists, hospitals, and ambulances, used antipersonnel weapons including cluster bombs in densely settled urban areas, used white phosphorous as a weapon, used depleted uranium weapons, and employed a new version of napalm found in Mark 77 firebombs.

“The U.S. military has engaged in collective punishment of Iraqi civilian populations, including by blocking roads, cutting electricity and water, destroying fuel stations, planting bombs in farm fields, demolishing houses, and plowing down orchards.

“The Fourth Geneva Convention forbids collective punishment and the targeting of civilians. Article VI of the U.S. Constitution makes that Convention the law of the land.

“In all of this, President George W. Bush has acted in a manner contrary to his trust as President, and subversive of constitutional government, to the prejudice of the cause of law and justice and the manifest injury of the people of the United States.

“Wherefore, President George W. Bush, by such conduct, is guilty of an impeachable offense warranting removal from office.”

The above article’s accuracy is not easy to dispute. Cluster bombs have been banned since 2010 by a treaty to which 79 nations thus far are party. Another 34 nations have signed but not yet ratified the ban.²¹ The United States is not among the signers. According to the Cluster Munition Coalition,²² the nations most contaminated by cluster bombs are Laos and Vietnam,

followed by Iraq and Cambodia. “Cluster munitions stand out as the weapon that poses the gravest dangers to civilians since antipersonnel mines, which were banned in 1997. ... Simply put, cluster munitions kill and injure too many civilians. The weapon caused more civilian casualties in Iraq in 2003 and Kosovo in 1999 than any other weapon system.” Those actions were illegal at the time, under the Geneva Conventions.

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), “Cluster munitions are inaccurate and unreliable weapons that by their very nature pose unacceptable dangers to civilians. They pose an immediate threat during conflict by randomly scattering thousands of submunitions or ‘bomblets’ over a vast area, and they continue to take even more civilian lives and limbs long after a conflict has ended, as hundreds of submunitions may fail to explode upon impact, littering the landscape with landmine-like ‘duds.’”

After the United States, France, and the United Kingdom had dropped 61,000 cluster bombs containing 20 million submunitions on Iraq in 1991, according to HRW, between 2003 and 2006, the United States and allies dropped another 13,000 cluster bombs containing two million submunitions. Cluster bombs were dropped in residential areas, where many bomblets failed to explode and were picked up later by children or lie unexploded to this day.

“Causalities from failed cluster sub munitions rose between 1991 and 2007 from 5,500 to 80,000, 45.7% between the age of 15 and 29 years of age, and 23.9% were children under the age of 14. Both UNICEF and UNDP believe these figures are an underestimation.”²³

The U.S. corporate media has recently been reporting extensively on the targeting of civilians with cluster bombs . . . by Syria -- a crime the U.S. government cannot oppose without hypocrisy.

White phosphorous when used as a weapon against civilians is an incendiary weapon, illegal under the Geneva Conventions and according to the U.S. Army's own field manual, as well as Protocol III of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons to which 106 nations are party, including the United States as of 2009. Protocol III reads, in part, "It is prohibited in all circumstances to make any military objective located within a concentration of civilians the object of attack by air-delivered incendiary weapons." The U.S. Army has admitted targeting the city of Fallujah with white phosphorous during both major assaults on that Iraqi city in 2004.²⁴ According to the BBC, "White phosphorus is highly flammable and ignites on contact with oxygen. If the substance hits someone's body, it will burn until deprived of oxygen. Globalsecurity.org, a defence website, says: 'Phosphorus burns on the skin are deep and painful... These weapons are particularly nasty because white phosphorus continues to burn until it disappears... it could burn right down to the bone.'"²⁵

While the damage done by white phosphorous is immediately and grotesquely physical, the U.S. Army describes it as a "psychological weapon."²⁶

Depleted Uranium use in weapons has been banned by some nations, and there have been movements to ban it in the European Parliament, the Latin American Parliament, and the United Nations. But the U.S., the U.K., and France are among the supporters of the use of DU weapons. According to the BBC in

March 2013,²⁷ “Cleaning up more than 300 sites in Iraq still contaminated by depleted uranium (DU) weapons will cost at least \$30m, according to a report by a Dutch peace group The report, which was funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, warns that the contamination is being spread by poorly regulated scrap metal dealers, including children. It also documents evidence that DU munitions were fired at light vehicles, buildings and other civilian infrastructure including the Iraqi Ministry of Planning in Baghdad -- casting doubt on official assurances that only armoured vehicles were targeted. ‘The use of DU in populated areas is alarming,’ it says, adding that many more contaminated sites are likely to be discovered.”

The United States has refused to disclose the locations where it has used DU, impeding efforts to clean it up. An impeachment might have forced that information and much else public. The most heavily impacted area is believed to be around Basra.

“More than 400 tonnes of DU ammunition are estimated to have been fired by jets and tanks in the two Iraq wars in 1991 and 2003, the vast majority by US forces. . . . Iraqi doctors have reported increases in cancers, and an alleged rise in birth defects is under investigation by the World Health Organisation and the Iraqi Ministry of Health.”

Possible DU poisoning has also severely impacted many U.S. veterans of OIL²⁸

Mark 77 firebombs are another form of illegal incendiary weapon, one with similar effects to napalm. The U.S. military admits to using Mark 77 firebombs on Iraqi troops but denies

using them on civilians. When asked if it uses napalm, the U.S. military denies it. Yet, members of the military using Mark 77 firebombs refer to them as napalm. “The generals love napalm,” said Col. James Alles, referring to Mark 77 firebombs. “It has a big psychological effect.”²⁹

Either that or it produces excruciatingly painful deaths.

BIRTH DEFECTS

In October 2012, the *Independent* reported on a new study linking Western military forces’ actions in Iraq with a “huge rise in birth defects.”³⁰ This is one of the results of war that comes from modern technological progress. Diseases that used to kill us don’t always do so anymore, but we’ve manufactured new ones. In Fallujah, mothers giving birth have been known to ask, “Is it normal?” And doctors have encouraged women not to get pregnant.

“Fallujah’s homes and businesses were left shattered; hundreds of Iraqi civilians were killed,” the *Independent* reported. “Its residents changed the name of their ‘City of Mosques’ to ‘the polluted city’ after the United States launched two massive military campaigns eight years ago. Now, one month before the World Health Organisation reveals its view on the legacy of the two battles for the town, a new study reports a ‘staggering rise’ in birth defects among Iraqi children conceived in the aftermath of the war.

“High rates of miscarriage, toxic levels of lead and mercury contamination and spiraling numbers of birth defects ranging from congenital heart defects to brain dysfunctions and mal-

formed limbs have been recorded. Even more disturbingly, they appear to be occurring at an increasing rate in children born in Fallujah, about 40 miles west of Baghdad.

“There is ‘compelling evidence’ to link the increased numbers of defects and miscarriages to military assaults, says Mozghan Savabieasfahani, one of the lead authors of the report and an environmental toxicologist at the University of Michigan’s School of Public Health. Similar defects have been found among children born in Basra after British troops invaded, according to the new research. . . .

“The new findings, published in the Environmental Contamination and Toxicology bulletin, will bolster claims that US and Nato munitions used in the conflict led to a widespread health crisis in Iraq. They are the latest in a series of studies that have suggested a link between bombardment and a rise in birth defects. . . .

“The latest study found that in Fallujah, more than half of all babies surveyed were born with a birth defect between 2007 and 2010. Before the siege, this figure was more like one in 10. Prior to the turn of the millennium, fewer than 2 per cent of babies were born with a defect. More than 45 per cent of all pregnancies surveyed ended in miscarriage in the two years after 2004, up from only 10 per cent before the bombing. Between 2007 and 2010, one in six of all pregnancies ended in miscarriage. The new research, which looked at the health histories of 56 families in Fallujah, also examined births in Basra, in southern Iraq, attacked by British forces in 2003. . . . The report’s authors link the rising number of babies born with birth defects in the two cities to increased exposure to metals released by bombs and bullets used over the past two decades.”

In November 2011, Hannah Gurman had written in *Foreign Policy in Focus*: “In the years since the invasion, doctors in Fallujah have reported drastic increases in the number of premature births, infant mortality, and birth defects—babies born without skulls, missing organs, or with stumps for arms and legs. Fallujah General Hospital reported that, out of 170 babies born in September 2009, 24 percent died within the first seven days, of which 75 percent were deformed — as compared to August 2002, when there were 530 babies born, only six deaths, and one deformity. As the years go by, the problem seems to be getting worse, and doctors are increasingly warning women not to have children.”³¹

In April 2012, Robert Fisk wrote:³² “The pictures flash up on a screen on an upper floor of the Fallujah General Hospital. And all at once, Nadhem Shokr al-Hadidi’s administration office becomes a little chamber of horrors. A baby with a hugely deformed mouth. A child with a defect of the spinal cord, material from the spine outside the body. A baby with a terrible, vast Cyclopean eye. Another baby with only half a head, stillborn like the rest, date of birth 17 June, 2009. Yet another picture flicks onto the screen: date of birth 6 July 2009, it shows a tiny child with half a right arm, no left leg, no genitalia.”

SOCIOCIDE: The Killing of a Society

The birth defects in Fallujah are matched by increased rates of cancer and infant mortality in Basra. The natural environment of Iraq is damaged, as is the infrastructure of a modern society. Water supplies and sewage treatment plants, hospitals, bridges, electricity -- all devastated. Healthcare and nutrition and education are nothing like

they were before the war. How does one measure the extent of the damage done even to Iraqis just being born? As honestly as possible. And that means completely revising current understandings.

Even at the time of the 1991 bombings, war planners told the *Washington Post* that they targeted facilities that they hoped could not be repaired without foreign assistance.³³ The dream of the second Bush administration in 2003, after Bush had preached against “nation building” during his campaign for the presidency, was to build a nation in Iraq from scratch on a “free market” model as corrupt as a U.S. election.

Americans know that there was at least a little damage done to Iraq, because they know they spent money to repair it. And they believe it was a lot of money. In fact, it was less than 10% of what we continued to spend year after year adding to the damage, and most of it was never actually put to any useful purpose. At least a third of it was spent on “security” to protect the projects begun with the rest of it. But much of that money went into fraud and corruption in the U.S. military and its contractors and subcontractors. It is extremely difficult to build a society without the will of the people behind it, and that’s pretty hard to find while violently occupying their country. But a serious effort was not made. Instead, faith was placed in wealthy cronies who did not deserve it. The so-called “reconstruction” of Iraq made some people very wealthy, and U.S. media now blames the failure to actually reconstruct, and the decade without restored electricity or education or healthcare, on the Iraqis.³⁴

When you’re building a “democracy” from scratch it’s best not to have anything in the way. The Shock-and-Awe occupi-

ers allowed the cultural heritage of Iraq and the rest of us to be destroyed and looted. Iraq's treasures in museums and libraries have been destroyed with the support of the U.S. military after having been misidentified as the valueless creations of enemy creatures. When one civilian "reconstruction" official burst in on a group of U.S. and British military commanders to beg them urgently to protect the Iraqi Museum in 2003, "the British generals by and large understood the importance of protecting the museum, and started to respond almost immediately. And the American generals, by and large, just looked at us with, 'What do you expect us to do about that?'"³⁵

For years, the occupying forces broke the society down, encouraging ethnic and sectarian division and violence, resulting in a segregated country. For part of the story of how division was promoted by the occupiers rather than spontaneously erupting out of the backwardness of the ungrateful liberated, see *the Guardian's* report from March 6, 2013, called "Revealed: Pentagon's link to Iraqi torture centres; General David Petraeus and 'dirty wars' veteran behind commando units implicated in detainee abuse."³⁶ Now political instability and poor infrastructure (combined with Iraqis' refusal to give away most of the profits) have even turned the Western oil companies that met with Dick Cheney and asked for this war away from investing in Iraq; they are attracted more to the Kurdish region in the north than to contracts made in Baghdad.

Mike Ferner interviewed an elderly Iraqi man in what would later be called "the Sunni triangle" in 2004. The man talked about a young couple who had just gotten married in a nearby village, and almost as an aside said that the bride and groom were Sunni and Shia, as if it were hardly worth mentioning. "What is this 'Sunni...Shia' business?" he asked. "Before the

war we were all Iraqi.”

The educated who might have best helped rebuild Iraq fled the country, because they were able to, or because they were targeted for assassination. Iraqi culture took many steps backward. Women’s rights lost ground. Gay and lesbian rights lost ground. And a new generation grew up without knowledge or experience of peace.

The authors of *Erasing Iraq* concluded that the best term for what we’ve done to Iraq is *sociocide*, the killing of a society.

Iraq had the best universities in Western Asia in the early 1990s. Matthew Schweitzer describes the situation now: “In 2005, the UN determined that 84% of Iraq’s education institutions had been looted, burnt or destroyed. By 2008, the Iraqi Ministry of Education recorded 31,598 violent attacks against universities and schools across the country. Today, Iraq’s illiteracy rates are some of the highest in the region, and the Interior Ministry has admitted that over 9,000 fake university degrees were purchased by prominent civil servants. The physical destruction was compounded by targeted assassinations of Iraq’s academics. Over 500 professors have been killed, from every discipline -- a number that continues to grow.”³⁷

The story of Isam al-Rawi, the head of the Association of University Lecturers, is told in Nicolas J.S. Davies’ *Blood on Our Hands*. Al-Rawi collected details on 300 academics and university staff killed by the end of 2004, plus 2,000 more who had fled the country.³⁸ Professor al-Rawi stayed in Iraq and was assassinated outside his home in Baghdad on October 30, 2006. At the end of 2005, the Minister of Education reported another 296 faculty and staff were murdered that year. In 2006, Haifa

Zangana wrote: “For the occupation’s aims to be fulfilled, independent minds have to be eradicated. We feel that we are witnessing a deliberate attempt to destroy intellectual life in Iraq.”³⁹ Since 2006, according to the UN office for humanitarian affairs, another 180 teachers have been killed, and up to 100 kidnapped, while over 3,250 have fled the country. The population of teachers in Baghdad is down 80% according to the International Medical Corps. De-Baathification cost Iraq thousands of teachers who had joined the Baath party in order to get jobs.

In the liberated Iraq, women are less safe. Girls are less safe. And this has been the case since shortly after the shock and awe. “‘A month ago I was walking from my college to my house when I was abducted in the street by three men,’ said 23-year-old university student Hania Abdul-Jabbar in a July 2005 interview with IRIN. The men, she continued, ‘dropped acid in my face and on my legs. They cut all my hair off while hitting me in the face many times telling me it’s the price for not obeying God’s wish in using the veil. Today I cannot see out of one eye because the acid made me lose my vision. I am afraid to leave my house. Now I am permanently disfigured with a monster face.’”

Prior to the past 20 years of U.S. assault on Iraq, there were gay bars and open homosexuality in Baghdad. Now the shiny new Iraqi Constitution sanctions the murder of unfaithful women and of homosexual men whether faithful or not. “Abu Qussay, an Iraqi father who killed his son after the son’s homosexuality was revealed, is proud of the murder. ‘I hanged him in my house in front of his brother to give an example to all of them and prevent them from doing the same.’” Between 2003 and 2009 at least 455 gay men were brutally murdered , many

through a technique that glues the anus shut and then forces the victim to consume a drink that causes diarrhea. Videos of this have been proudly circulated.

You cannot destroy a nation and hire religious fanatics to attack other types of religious fanatics without creating hell on earth. And that is what we have done in Iraq. Meanwhile our own gay activist groups in the United States have taken some interest in advancing the rights to marry or work or obtain healthcare without discrimination, but primarily they have been obsessed with the goal of participating openly in the next sociocide.

On March 13, 2013, Bie Kentane published a report on the fate of children in Iraq.⁴⁰ “For two decades, Iraqi children have been subjected to grave violations of human rights,” she wrote. “Due to decades of war, foreign occupation and international sanctions, Iraq has turned into one of the worst places for children in the Middle East and North Africa with around 3.5 million living in poverty, 1.5 million under the age of five undernourished and 100 infants dying every day.”

Kentane argues that the Geneva Convention on protection of children and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child have been violated by the occupying forces and the Iraqi government. Among the rights violated has been the right to an education: “The destruction or closing of schools and universities, the displacement of the population and the fact that teachers are members of the professional class who were killed or forced to leave Iraq, resulted in loss of schooling for children and young people, and therefore loss of life opportunities.”

Part of the problem is ongoing violence: “The UNESCO Na-

tional Education Support Strategy released in 2008 estimated that 2 million children of primary school age did not attend school largely due to the security situation. While the situation has improved, children's access to education remains compromised by the security situation. 'Many threats against schools continue to come from (*the so called*) "insurgent groups" demanding a change in the curriculum or attempting to deny students from certain targeted groups access to education. The punishment for failing to comply with these demands is often violence.'"

Then there are the ripple effects of violence: "Almost every child is growing up as a son or daughter to victims of severe human rights violations such as torture, rape or chemical attacks. Most of today's parents have not had the possibility to mourn their losses and recover from their traumatic experiences due to a lack of rehabilitation services and social recognition. Children living in survivor families therefore frequently become victims of aggression, physical and emotional abuse and neglect-effects of intergenerational conflict and dysfunctional family structures produced by collective trauma."

Kentane reviews studies finding 14 - 30% of Iraqi children to be suffering PTSD. However, there are only three child psychiatrists in the whole country.

In addition, many children age 0 - 14, including many orphans, are working to earn a living. Many face problems with drug use and sexual exploitation, including sexual enslavement and sale abroad.



IN CONTEXT

COMPARING DEATHS: Iraq and the Other Worst Wars

Understanding that there are countless shortcomings in any comparisons across wars fought in different epochs, using different technologies, operating under different conceptions of law, etc., here are some comparisons that nonetheless seem useful. The following is, of course, a sampling and not intended in any way as a comprehensive discussion of all U.S. or global wars.

In the American War for Independence, some 63,000 died, including 46,000 Americans, 10,000 British, and 7,000 Hes-

sians. There don't seem to be good statistics for the French, who fought on the American side. The British and the U.S. each had about 6,000 wounded. Civilians were not killed in significant numbers in battle, as they are in modern war. But the war likely caused a smallpox epidemic, which took 130,000 lives. It is noteworthy that more Americans died than did those on the other side, that more died than were wounded and lived, that more soldiers died than civilians, that the United States won, that the war was fought within the United States, and that no refugee crisis was created (although the gate was opened wide to genocide of Native Americans and other future wars).

In the War of 1812, some 3,800 U.S. and British soldiers died fighting, but disease brought the death total to some 20,000. The number of wounded was smaller, as it would be in most wars before penicillin and other medical advances arrived for World War II and later wars. Until then, more soldiers died of their wounds. The fighting in the War of 1812 did not kill large numbers of civilians. More Americans died than did those on the other side. The war was fought within the United States, but the war was a failure. Canada was not conquered. On the contrary, Washington D.C. was burned. No major refugee crisis resulted.

U.S. wars against Native Americans were one part of a genocide. According to the U.S. Census Bureau in 1894, "The Indian wars under the government of the United States have been more than 40 in number. They have cost the lives of about 19,000 white men, women and children, including those killed in individual combats, and the lives of about 30,000 Indians." These were wars fought within the United States, which the U.S. government "won" more often than it lost, and in which the other side suffered the greater share of deaths, including

significant deaths inflicted on civilians. A refugee crisis of major proportions was one of the primary results. In several ways, these wars are a closer model for later U.S. wars than other early wars are.

In the U.S. war on Mexico of 1846-1848, 1,773 Americans were killed in action, while 13,271 died from sickness, and 4,152 were wounded in the conflict. Approximately 25,000 Mexicans were killed or wounded. Once again, disease was the big killer. Again, more died than were wounded and survived. Fewer Americans died than did those on the other side. More soldiers died than civilians. And the United States won the war.

In each of the wars described above, the casualty figures were larger percentages of the overall populations at the time than they are of populations today. Whether and how that makes the wars worse than the absolute casualty counts suggest is a matter for debate. Adjusting for population does not have as significant an effect as one might think. The U.S. population at the time of its war on Mexico was almost as big as Iraq's population at the time of Shock and Awe. The United States lost 15,000. Iraq lost 1.4 million. To be more precise, the U.S. population was about 22 million and Mexico's about 2 million, of whom some 80,000 were in the territories seized by the United States. Those 80,000 saw their nationality changed, although some were permitted to remain Mexican. Iraq saw millions made homeless, including millions forced to travel outside Iraq and live as refugees in foreign lands.

The U.S. Civil War, which grew out of the war on Mexico and other factors, stands apart. The death count is usually estimated at something remarkably close to the 654,965 Iraqis

killed as of June 2006, as reported by Johns Hopkins. One researcher lists the Civil War casualties as follows:⁴¹

Total military dead: 618,022, including 360,022 Northern and 258,000 Southern. For the North, 67,058 died in combat, 43,012 from wounds, 219,734 from disease, including 57,265 from dysentery, and 30,218 died as prisoners of war. For the South, 94,000 died in combat, an unknown number from wounds, 138,024 from disease, and 25,976 as prisoners of war. Another 455,175 were wounded, including 275,175 from the North and 180,000 from the South.

More recent research, using census data, estimates the U.S. Civil War dead at 750,000.⁴² Estimations and speculation place civilian deaths, including from starvation, at an additional 50,000 or more. A U.S. population of 31.4 million in 1860, reduced by 800,000, means a loss of 2.5%, or less than half what Iraq lost in OIL; 1,455,590 killed out of 27 million is a loss of 5.4%.

The U.S. Civil War numbers finally begin to approach the death toll of major modern wars, while still remaining relatively evenly divided between the two sides. In addition, the numbers wounded begin to surpass the numbers dead. Yet, the killing remains mainly the killing of soldiers, not civilians.

The first U.S. overthrow of a foreign government beyond the destruction of the Native American nations was in Hawaii in 1893. Nobody died, and one Hawaiian was wounded. The pattern of behavior begun, however, would never again be so bloodless.

The U.S. wars on Cuba and the Philippines begin to move

us in a new direction. These are violent occupations on foreign soil. Disease remains a big killer, but it impacts one side disproportionately, because the conflict is taking place far from the shores of the occupier.

The Spanish-American War was fought in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Guam, but not in the United States. The war on the Philippines was fought in the Philippines. In the Spanish-American War, the United States saw 496 killed in action, 202 died of wounds, 5,509 died from disease, and 250 were killed by the United States' own (presumably accidental) destruction of the *USS Maine* prior to the war. The Spanish saw 786 killed in action, 8,627 died of wounds, and 53,440 died from disease. The Cubans saw another 10,665 dead.

But it is in the Philippines that the death count, as well as the length of the war, really begin to look familiar. The United States had 4,000 killed, mostly by disease, plus 64 from Oregon. The Philippines had 20,000 combatants killed, plus 200,000 to 1,500,000 civilians dead from violence and diseases, including cholera. Over 15 years, by some estimates, the United States' occupying forces, together with disease, killed over 1.5 million civilians in the Philippines, out of a population of 6 to 7 million. That's less than a quarter the size of the Iraqi population, with a similar sized slaughter imposed on it, over a period roughly twice as long. A population of 7 million losing 1.5 million lives is losing a staggering 21% of its population -- making this war, by that standard, if the high-end estimate of deaths is correct, the worst war the United States has engaged in, apart from the Native American genocide. The U.S. death count of 4,000 in the Philippines is very similar to the U.S. death count in Iraq. From here on out, U.S. death counts will be smaller than those on the other side, and military death counts

will be smaller than civilian. Victories also become questionable or temporary.

The First World War saw some 10 million military deaths, about 6 million of them on the side of Russia, France, the British, and other Allies. About a third of those deaths were due to the Spanish influenza. About 7 million civilians were killed in Russia, Turkey, Germany and elsewhere by violence, famine, and disease. The “Spanish” flu epidemic was largely created by the war, which increased transmission and augmented mutation; the war may also have increased the lethality of the virus. That epidemic killed 50 to 100 million people worldwide. The Armenian genocide and wars in Russia and Turkey arguably grew out of this war, as arguably did World War II. Ultimately, total death counts are impossible. But we can note that this war involved direct and indirect killing on a larger scale, that the direct killing was relatively evenly balanced between the two sides, and that the wounded now outnumbered those killed. This was intense, rapid killing that took place in the space of just over 4 years, rather than an occupation as lengthy as those of Iraq or Afghanistan in the 21st century. But the direct deaths were spread over dozens of nations. The highest death count by nation was 1,773,300 in Germany, followed by 1,700,000 in Russia, 1,357,800 in France, 1,200,000 in Austria-Hungary, 908,371 in the British Empire (actually many nations), and 650,000 in Italy, with no other nation’s casualties rising above 350,000. The 1.7 million killed in Germany were taken from a population of 68 million. The 1.7 million killed in Russia were taken from a population of 170 million. Iraq lost a similar number of lives in its recent “liberation,” but from a population of only 27 million. Yet, somehow we think of World War I as a senseless horror of truly staggering proportions, and of the liberation of Iraq as a regime change that didn’t go very well.

WWII is the worst single thing humanity has done to itself in any relatively short period of time. Setting aside the catastrophic side effects and repercussions from which we may never recover (any more than U.S. troops may ever leave Germany or Japan), the absolute number of people killed -- some 70 million -- easily tops the list. Even at a low estimate of 50 million, it would still easily top the list. Measured as a percentage of global population killed, World War II falls behind the killing done by Genghis Khan, the Xin dynasty, the An Lushan revolt, and the fall of the Ming dynasty and of Rome. But World War II, no matter how you measure the deaths, whether in absolute numbers or as a proportion of the world's population, is way out ahead of all other wars and every isolated genocide. The only other events that can be put ahead of World War II, measured by share of the global population killed, are five events that each took place over a number of centuries, including the slave trade and the conquest of the Americas.⁴³

However, the above analysis looks at the entire globe. The impact of World War II on particular nations varied dramatically, ranging from 16% of the population of Poland killed, all the way down to 0.01% of the population of Iraq killed. That compares to 5% of Iraq's population killed by Operation Iraqi Liberation (1,455,590 killed out of 27 million). About 12 nations lost more than 5% of their population in World War II. Japan lost 3% to 4%. France and Italy lost 1% each. The U.K. lost less than 1%. The United States lost 0.3%. Nine nations in World War II lost a million or more lives. Among those that did not were France, Italy, the U.K., and the U.S. So, in the case of Iraq, the more recent war was the worse one, and it was worse than many nations' experience in World War II. We can also conclude without a shadow of doubt that the damage done to nations' population is not what determines the number of Hol-

lywood movies made about one war rather than another.

With World War II we entered the era in which civilian deaths outnumber military deaths. About 60% to 70% of the deaths were civilian, a figure that includes victims of bombing and all other violence including the holocaust and ethnic cleansing campaigns, as well as disease and famine. We also enter the era in which killing can very disproportionately impact one side. What Germany did to the Soviet Union and Poland, and what Japan did to China account for the vast bulk of the dying. Thus the victorious allies suffered the greater share. We also enter the era in which the wounded outnumber the dead, and the era in which war deaths come primarily from violence rather than disease. And we opened the door to a tremendous escalation in U.S. military presence and operations around the globe, an escalation that is ongoing.

The war on Korea, which has also never ended, in its initial intense years killed an estimated 1.5 to 2 million civilians, North and South, plus nearly a million military dead on the side of the North and China, a quarter million or more military dead from the South, 36,000 dead from the United States, and much smaller numbers from several other nations. The military wounded far outnumbered the military dead. As in World War II, some two-thirds of the deaths were civilian, and U.S. deaths were few compared with others. Unlike World War II, there was no victory; that was the beginning of a trend that would last.

The war on Vietnam was Korea, but doubled. There was a similar lack of victory and a similar number of U.S. casualties, but a much larger number of deaths for the people who lived in the battlefield. The U.S. dead turn out to have accounted

for 1.6% of the dying. That compares to about 0.3% in Iraq. A 2008 study by Harvard Medical School and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington estimated 3.8 million violent war deaths, combat and civilian, north and south, during the years of U.S. involvement in Vietnam.⁴⁴ The civilian deaths outnumbered the combat deaths, again amounting to about two-thirds of total deaths. The wounded were in much higher numbers, and judging by South Vietnamese hospital records, one-third were women and one-quarter children under age 13. U.S. casualties included 58,000 killed and 153,303 wounded, plus 2,489 missing. (Medical advances help explain the ratio of wounded to killed; subsequent medical advanced and body armor advances may help explain why U.S. deaths in Iraq were not at a level similar to U.S. deaths in Korea or Vietnam.) The 3.8 million out of a population of 40 million is nearly a 10% loss, or twice what OIL did to Iraq. War spilled into neighboring countries. Refugee crises ensued. Environmental damage and delayed deaths, often due to Agent Orange, continue to this day.

The more recent war on Iraq, measured purely in terms of deaths, may compare favorably to the war on Vietnam, but the details of how the killing was done are remarkably similar, as shown in Nick Turse's important new book *Kill Anything That Moves*. Turse documents that policy decisions handed down from the top led consistently, over a period of years, to the ongoing slaughter of millions of civilians in Vietnam. Much of the killing was done by hand or with guns or artillery, but the lion's share came in the form of 3.4 million combat sorties flown by U.S. and South Vietnamese aircraft between 1965 and 1972.

The well-known My Lai massacre in Vietnam was not an

aberration. Turse documents a pattern of atrocities so pervasive that one is compelled to begin viewing the war itself as one large atrocity. Similarly, endless atrocities and scandals in Afghanistan and Iraq are not aberrations even though U.S. militarists have interpreted them as freak occurrences having nothing to do with the general thrust of the war.

“Kill anything that moves,” was an order given to U.S. troops in Vietnam indoctrinated with racist hatred for the Vietnamese. “360 degree rotational fire” was a command given on the streets of Iraq to U.S. troops similarly conditioned to hate, and similarly worn down with physical exhaustion.

Dead children in Vietnam elicited comments like “Tough shit, they grow up to be VC.” One of the U.S. helicopter killers in Iraq heard in the “Collateral Murder” video says of dead children, “Well it’s their fault for bringing their kids into a battle.” President Obama’s spokesperson commented on a 16-year-old American killed by a U.S. drone in Yemen: “I would suggest that you should have a far more responsible father if they are truly concerned about the well being of their children.” The “they” clearly means foreigners or Muslims, and the murder of the son is disgracefully justified by reference to his father.

In Vietnam anyone dead was the enemy, and sometimes weapons would be planted on them. In drone wars, any dead males are militants, and in Iraq and Afghanistan weapons have often been planted on victims.

The U.S. military during the Vietnam War shifted from keeping prisoners toward murdering prisoners, just as the Endless War on Everywhere has shifted from incarceration toward murder with the change in president from Bush to Obama.

In Vietnam, as in Iraq, rules of engagement were broadened until the rules allowed shooting at anything that moved. In Vietnam, as in Iraq, the U.S. military sought to win people over by terrorizing them. In Vietnam, as in Afghanistan, whole villages were eliminated.

In Vietnam, refugees suffered in horrible camps, while in Afghanistan children have frozen to death in a refugee camp near Kabul. Torture was common in Vietnam, including waterboarding. But at that time it hadn't yet been depicted in a Hollywood movie as a positive occurrence. Napalm, white phosphorus, cluster bombs, and other widely despised and banned weapons were used in Vietnam, as they are in the "global war on terra [*sic*]." Vast environmental destruction was part of both wars. Gang rape was a part of both wars. The mutilation of corpses was common in both wars. Bulldozers flattened people's villages in Vietnam, not unlike what U.S.-made bulldozers do now to Palestine.

Mass murders of civilians in Vietnam, as in Iraq and Afghanistan, tended to be driven by a desire for revenge. New weaponry allowed U.S. troops in Vietnam to shoot long distances, resulting in a habit of shooting first and investigating later, a habit now developed for drone strikes. Self-appointed teams on the ground and in helicopters went "hunting" for natives to kill in Vietnam as in Afghanistan. And of course, Vietnamese leaders were targeted for assassination.

Vietnamese victims who saw their loved ones tortured, murdered, and mutilated are -- in some cases -- still furious with rage decades later. It's not hard to calculate how long such rage will last in the nations now being "liberated."

Throughout the centuries, overlapping with the larger wars

I've been describing, the U.S. has engaged in numerous smaller wars. These wars continued between the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam and the U.S. invasion of Iraq. An example is the 1983 invasion of Grenada. Grenada lost 45 lives and Cuba 25, the United States 19, with 119 U.S. wounded. Another example is the U.S. invasion of Panama in 1989. Panama lost between 500 and 3,000, while the U.S. lost 23 lives.

The United States assisted Iraq in its war on Iran during the 1980s. Each side lost hundreds of thousands of lives, with Iran suffering perhaps two-thirds of the deaths.

Operation Desert Storm, 17 January 1991 – 28 February 1991, as mentioned above, killed some 103,000 Iraqis, including 83,000 civilians. It only killed 258 Americans (making them 0.25% of the dead), although injuries showed up in the years that followed. At the end of the war 0.1% of participating U.S. troops were considered killed or wounded, but by 2002, 27.7% of veterans were listed as dead or wounded.

The U.S. war on Afghanistan is ongoing, with defeat inevitable. As with Iraq, it has a back-story of death and destruction dating back many years -- in this case at least to what Zbigniew Brzezinski admitted was a U.S. effort to provoke a Soviet invasion in 1979. U.S. deaths in Afghanistan since 2001 are about 2,000, plus 10,000 wounded, plus much greater numbers of troops with brain injuries and PTSD, as discussed above. During some years, suicides have outpaced combat deaths. But, as in other modern wars, the occupied nation has suffered most of the injuries and deaths, including about 10,000 Afghan security forces killed, 200 Northern Alliance forces killed, and tens or hundreds of thousands of civilians killed violently, plus as many as hundreds of thousands or millions dead from

nonviolent results of the war including freezing, starvation, and disease. Afghanistan's refugee crisis has been expanded by millions during the current occupation, while U.S. missile strikes in northern Pakistan have created another 2.5 million refugees.

U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan, Yemen, and Somalia are producing significant numbers of deaths, almost all of them on one side.⁴⁵

PAKISTAN

CIA Drone Strikes in Pakistan 2004–2013

Total US strikes: **365**

Obama strikes: **313**

Total reported killed: **2,536-3,577**

Civilians reported killed: **411-884**

Children reported killed: **168-197**

Total reported injured: **1,173-1,464**

YEMEN

US Covert Action in Yemen 2002–2013

Confirmed US drone strikes: **43-53**

Total reported killed: **228-325**

Civilians reported killed: **12-45**

Children reported killed: **2**

Reported injured: **62-144**

Possible extra US drone strikes: **77-95**

Total reported killed: **277-443**

Civilians reported killed: **23-49**

Children reported killed: **9-10**

Reported injured: **73-94**

All other US covert operations: **12-76**

Total reported killed: **148-366**

Civilians reported killed: **60-87**
Children reported killed: **25**
Reported injured: **22-111**

SOMALIA

US Covert Action in Somalia 2007–2013

US drone strikes: **3-9**
Total reported killed: **7-27**
Civilians reported killed: **0-15**
Children reported killed: **0**
Reported injured: **2-24**
All other US covert operations: **7-14**
Total reported killed: **51-143**
Civilians reported killed: **11-42**
Children reported killed: **1-3**
Reported injured: **15-20**

The high end of these counts totals 4,881, remarkably close to the figure of 4,700 that Senator Lindsey Graham has made public -- without, however, explaining where he got it. These numbers compare very favorably to Operation Iraqi Liberation (meaning they are smaller), but making that comparison may be dangerous. The United States did not replace a ground war or a traditional bombing campaign with a drone war in the countries above. It created drone wars where it would have been very unlikely to create any wars at all, in the absence of drones. The numbers of those killed by drone strikes in these nations will, if current trends continue, soon match the 7,000 Westerners killed by Muslim terrorists in the past 40 years, including in Israel and on 9/11. The millions killed in Iraq and Afghanistan are all in excess of that number.

Then there's the money.

When Americans hear “the cost of war” they often think of two things: dollars and U.S. soldiers’ lives. During the G.W.O.T. Americans have not been asked to sacrifice, to cut back, to pay more taxes, or to contribute to the cause. In fact, they’ve had their taxes reduced, especially if they have large incomes or are among the population of “corporate persons.” (Wealth concentration is a common result of wars, and these ones are no exception.) U.S.ians have not been drafted for military or other duty, except through the poverty draft and the deceptions of the military recruiters. But this lack of sacrifice hasn’t meant no financial cost. Below is a menu of past wars and price tags in 2011 dollars. The trend seems to be moving mostly in the wrong direction.

- War of 1812 - \$1.6 billion
- Revolutionary War - \$2.4 billion
- Mexican War - \$2.4 billion
- Spanish-American War - \$9 billion
- Civil War - \$79.7 billion
- Persian Gulf - \$102 billion
- World War I - \$334 billion
- Korea - \$341 billion
- Afghanistan - \$600 billion
- Vietnam - \$738 billion
- Iraq - \$810 billion
- Total post-9/11 - \$1.4 trillion
- World War II - \$4.1 trillion

Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes, years ago now, calculated the true total cost of OIL as three to five trillion (higher now that the war went on for years longer than expected). That’s a cost that includes impacts on oil prices, future care of veterans, and -- notably -- lost opportunities.

Brown University's "Cost of War" Project garnered attention this month by claiming the U.S. cost for the war on Iraq would be \$2.2 trillion.⁴⁶ A few clicks into the website one finds this:⁴⁷ "Total US federal spending associated with the Iraq war has been \$1.7 trillion through FY2013. In addition, future health and disability payments for veterans will total \$590 billion and interest accrued to pay for the war will add up to \$3.9 trillion." The 1.7 plus the 0.59 equals 2.29 trillion. The additional \$3.9 trillion in interest has been left out. And, even though Brown is taking its data from papers by Linda Bilmes, it leaves out numerous considerations that were included in Bilmes' and Stiglitz' book *The Three Trillion Dollar War*, including most notably the impact of the war on fuel prices and the impact of lost opportunities. Adding those to the \$6.19 trillion listed here would make the estimate of \$3 to \$5 trillion in Bilmes' and Stiglitz' book look as "conservative" as they said it was.

Lost opportunity is not just a financial matter, however. If the United States had taken five trillion dollars, and -- instead of spending it to kill the society of Iraq -- chosen to do good with it, at home or abroad, just imagine the possibilities. For \$5 trillion, Iraq might have been made into a paradise on earth, provided the Iraqis were permitted to be in charge of it. (And don't tell me Saddam Hussein wouldn't have cooperated with reformers for that kind of prize.) For \$5 trillion, you could spend \$185,000 on every man, woman, and child in Iraq, or give it to them. The United Nations thinks \$30 billion a year would end world hunger.⁴⁸ That may be a line from a beauty pageant, but it's also less money than the Pentagon routinely *loses*.⁴⁹ For \$5 trillion, why not end world hunger for 167 years? Why not save more lives than the lives you could have killed by spending \$5 trillion in the usual way? For \$5 trillion, you can start thinking about clean water for the world, sustain-

able clean energy, disease eradication. The lives that could be saved and enhanced make the lives lost in war finally begin to seem small. The climate crisis that threatens us all -- a danger far more real than the Terrorist Threat -- could be addressed (and more jobs and wealth generated in the process, incidentally) by shifting the spending from war to peace. That is the opportunity that has been lost.

IS THERE MORE WAR OR LESS THAN THERE USED TO BE?

An ideological argument has been put forward that war is on its way out, that violence has decreased around the globe with every century, and perhaps every decade, that has passed. Western civilization and capitalism are depicted as forces of peace. The success of the Europeans in not attacking themselves on the same scale since World War II is rightly celebrated. The willingness of European nations to join with the United States in waging aggressive war on others is overlooked.

Those who have heard that war is retreating from global culture may wish to know how the severity of the recent war on Iraq fits into that story. The short answer is that it doesn't. We are compelled to choose between the facts about Iraq and the worldviews of authors like Steven Pinker, Jared Diamond, and Daniel Jonah Goldhagen.

Will Iraq and Afghanistan be the last wars of their types? Will major military powers stop occupying other nations or do so only in ways that create fewer deaths? I certainly hope so. But that prediction could have been made about Vietnam too.

Citing supposed millennial trends of declining violence would have made as much sense then as now, and such claims are highly misleading.

Reasons to think war is not over include: the unpredictability of wars once begun; the relentless push for war in the U.S., Israeli, and other governments; the development of NATO into an aggressive global force; the proliferation of nuclear technology; the ever greater corruption of the U.S. government by the military industrial complex; the ever-expanding U.S. military presence around the globe; U.S. provocations toward China, Korea, Russia, and Iran; the increases in military spending by China and many other nations; climate crises about to confront nations that have not learned how to behave in a civilized manner; and misconceptions about past wars including the recent war in Libya and proposals for wider war in Syria.

Reasons to think war might be on the decline include the world's success in not yet repeating World War II; the spread of independent media technologies; political progress in South and Central America; the decline of the U.S. empire (although that could be bad news as easily as good); and long-term historical trends in the decline of violence -- if you believe them.

Questionable claims about long-term and recent trends have been made by a number of U.S. academics, including Steven Pinker in his book, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*. Pinker minimizes the death and destruction of OIL in order to boost his contention that war is almost gone from the earth. He does so as part of an approach that views war as something done by nations other than the United States, and something supposedly done more by “uncivilized” tribes.

Perhaps Pinker is still rebelling against Noam Chomsky, whose linguistic Platonism he debunked in his earlier book *The Language Instinct*. For whatever reason, Pinker avoids any serious criticism of the one country that now spends roughly as much on war as the rest of the world combined. Pinker repeatedly examines statistics on the history of large numbers of nations, ignoring the existence of our own very exceptional state. Democratic, free-trading nations with membership in international bodies are unlikely war makers, Pinker finds -- only by ignoring that one particular nation that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. famously called the greatest purveyor of violence in the world.

Poor nations and Muslim nations are more likely locations for wars, Pinker notes without indicating any awareness that wealthy nations sometimes attack them and other times arm and fund their dictators. Also likely countries to make war are those with ideologies, Pinker tells us. (As everyone knows, the United States has no ideology.) “The three deadliest postwar conflicts,” Pinker writes, “were fueled by Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese communist regimes that had a fanatical dedication to outlasting their opponents.” Pinker goes on to blame the high death rate in Vietnam on the willingness of the Vietnamese to die in large numbers rather than surrender.

The current U.S. war on Iraq ended, in Pinker’s view, when President George W. Bush declared “mission accomplished,” since which point it has been a civil war, and therefore the causes of that civil war can be analyzed in terms of the shortcomings of Iraqi society. “[I]t is so hard,” Pinker complains, “to impose liberal democracy on countries in the developing world that have not outgrown their superstitions, warlords, and feuding tribes.” Indeed it may be, but where is the evidence

that the United States government has been attempting it? Or the evidence that the United States has such democracy itself?

Early in the book, Pinker presents a pair of charts aimed at showing that, proportionate to population, wars have killed more prehistoric and hunter-gatherer people than people in modern states. None of the prehistoric tribes listed go back earlier than 14,000 BCE, meaning that the vast majority of human existence is left out. And these charts list individual tribes and states, not pairs or groups of them that fought in wars. The absence of war through most of human history is left out of the equation,⁵⁰ dubious statistics are cited for earlier wars,⁵¹ those statistics are compared to the global population rather than the population of the tribes involved, and the deaths counted from recent U.S. wars are only U.S. deaths.

Pinker writes as if he has never met Noam Chomsky or anyone else who actually opposes war. War opponents don't object to slaughtering Vietnamese or Iraqis because U.S. troops die in the process or because the death count is greater than in past wars -- although, as we have seen above, it arguably is greater in Iraq than in most past wars. Rather, we are opposed to killing human beings, and to killing them in huge numbers in the countries where our government does it. The death counts in Vietnam and Iraq have been significant percentages of those nations' populations (10% and 5% respectively), regardless of the fact that the world as a whole contains many more people than it used to.

Pinker at one point does note that a war in Paraguay in the 19th century killed more of Paraguay's population than perhaps any other war anywhere else (an estimated 60% dead), but he looks at all other wars in terms of the globe's popula-

tion or the population of the wealthy nation that launches the war on a poor one. When Pinker finally mentions Vietnamese deaths over 100 pages later it is purely to make the death count in the latest war in Afghanistan look good by comparison. War deaths as a percentage of global population may be on the decline, but for recent decades we can't tell that from Pinker's misleading calculations, and the statistics he draws from the ancient past are far from reliable. And as good as it is to have many more people in the world who are not being killed in war, that fact doesn't necessarily erase the other side of the picture. We have, at least in certain parts of the world, people being killed on a scale that is rarely matched in history.

Edward Herman and David Peterson point out that, "the absolute numbers of people who die because of armed conflicts are a first-order measure of the true human cost of violence, and we should never permit the moral gravity of this loss and suffering to be relativized by the juggling of numbers until they all match the same global population in any given year. After all, what relationship did the mass deaths in the China of the 750s and 760s A.D. have with the human population then spread across the rest of the earth, whatever its size? Similarly, what relevance did the large population of Asia in the first-half of the 20th century (accounting for more than one-in-two people worldwide) have to the fact that the machinery of death available at the time of the Second World War set new records in mass violence, with the most civilized countries leading the killing process? Should the Nazi holocaust be downgraded in importance because the populations of China and India were so large?"

Pinker works hard to obscure this reality. Whether looking at U.S. deaths or deaths among the population the United States

is liberating from this world, Pinker argues against counting indirect or delayed deaths as too difficult. So the U.S. soldiers killed in Vietnam get counted, but those killed more slowly by Agent Orange or PTSD do not get counted. I'm fairly certain that spears and arrows did not have the same delayed effects as Agent Orange. U.S. soldiers killed in Afghanistan get counted by Pinker, but the greater number who die a bit later from injuries or suicide don't.

Pinker depicts the conduct of U.S. troops during Iraq's "civil war" by quoting more enlightened Marine Corps training materials than the materials Marines will tell you they've actually been trained in, and not by citing actual behavior or the experiences of actual trainees. Not only do victims of "civil wars" get recategorized (and the most credible estimates of Iraqi deaths reduced to a single study and that study unconvincingly dismissed), but those who die later from depleted uranium, white phosphorous, or other poisoning fit no category, and millions of refugees struggling in life-shortening conditions are overlooked. The victims of weapons testing do not appear. The environmental destruction to which war is such a huge contributor is not weighed against our supposed reduction in cruelty to animals. It's a glass-half-full world.⁵²

Pinker, apparently unaware of the existence of Palestine or Diego Garcia or other exceptions, notes that no developed country has expanded its territory by conquering another since the late 1940s. But something else advanced in the late 1940s and has been growing ever since, namely the coating of the globe with U.S. military bases, currently numbering nearly 1,000, with U.S. troops in some 177 countries.

One page after discussing Iraq War lies, Pinker dismisses

the idea of resource wars without suspecting that we may have already seen some and that wars may have more than a single motivation. Pinker is unconcerned that global warming could lead to wars through pressure on resources or immigration. Rising economic inequality is also not a serious threat to peace in Pinker's view. Pinker is even less disturbed by nuclear proliferation. He doesn't take time to consider the number of near misses or the growing possibility that an accident or misunderstanding or fit of rage will launch a nuclear weapon. There's no mention of the depleted uranium weapons already used, the "tactical" nukes developed, and the first-strike policy adopted by the United States. Pinker acknowledges the danger only in a very glass-half-full kind of way:

"If one were to calculate the amount of destruction that nations have actually perpetrated as a proportion of how much they could perpetrate, given the destructive capacity available to them, the postwar decades would be many orders of magnitude more peaceable than any time in history."

So, we're more peaceful because we've built more deadly weapons. Pinker, it turns out, is a fan of nuclear energy, even though nuclear energy facilities enable the spread of nuclear weaponry. He falsely claims that the Three Mile Island accident killed no one and that the use of nuclear power could reduce global warming, which appears to be mistaken.

Nuclear apocalypse and global warming are thus dismissed as irrelevant. But one reason that people may believe our own times are more, rather than less, violent than the past could be our awareness of the possibility of total destruction, even though it will remain only a possibility until that moment when and if it happens. Another reason people may believe violence

is increasing could, of course, be that in some places it certainly is.

Stephen Corry has written a critical review of Jared Diamond's latest book, *The World Until Yesterday: What We Can Learn from Traditional Societies*.⁵³ In Diamond's view, tribes kill more than societies with state governments. Corry explains: "Despite acknowledging, rather *sotto voce*, that there are no reports of any war at all in some societies, [Diamond] does not let this cloud his principal emphasis: most tribal peoples live in a state of *constant war*. He supports this entirely unverifiable and dangerous nonsense (as have others, such as Steven Pinker) by taking the numbers killed in wars and homicides in industrialized states and calculating the proportions of the total populations involved. He then compares the results with figures produced by anthropologists like Chignon for tribes like the Yanomami. He thinks that the results prove that a much higher proportion of individuals are killed in tribal conflict than in state wars; ergo tribal peoples are more violent than 'we' are."

Corry responds: "Is it meaningful, for example, to follow Diamond in calculating deaths in the fighting for Okinawa in 1945 as a percentage of the total populations of all combatant nations -- he gives the result as 0.10 percent -- and then comparing this with eleven tribal Dani deaths during a conflict in 1961. Diamond reckons the latter as 0.14 percent of the Dani population -- more than at Okinawa. Viewed like this, the Dani violence is worse than the bloodiest Pacific battle of WWII. But of course the largest nation involved in Okinawa was the U.S., which saw no fighting on its mainland at all. Would it not be more sensible to look at, say, the percentage of people killed who were actually in the areas where the war was tak-

ing place? No one knows, but estimates of the proportion of Okinawa citizens killed in the battle, for example, range from about 10 percent to 33 percent. Taking the upper figure gives a result of nearly 250 times more deaths than the proportion for the Dani violence, and does not even count any of the military killed in the battle.

“Similarly, Diamond tells us that the proportion of people killed in Hiroshima in August 1945 was a tiny 0.1 percent of the Japanese people. However, what about the much smaller ‘tribe’ of what we might call ‘Hiroshimans,’ whose death toll was nearly 50 percent from a single bomb? Which numbers are more meaningful; which could be seen as a contrivance to support the conceit that tribespeople are the bigger killers? By supposedly ‘proving’ his thesis in this way, to what degree does Diamond’s characterization differ significantly from labeling tribal peoples as ‘primitive savages,’ or at any rate as more savage than ‘we’ are?”

Daniel Jonah Goldhagen’s *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity*, takes a slightly different tack from Pinker or Diamond, arguing that mass killing or genocide is distinct from war and worse than war. Primarily this amounts to redefining portions of war, such as the U.S. firebombing of Japan or the Nazi holocaust, as something other than war, and defining famines and other hardships that grow out of wars as separate from war. But it also involves a defense of what’s left of war as good or necessary. To Goldhagen Operation Iraqi Liberation is not mass murder because it is “a just war.” The attacks of 9/11, Goldhagen says, were genocide. But U.S. attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq, despite killing vastly greater numbers of people, are not genocide, in Goldhagen’s view. Saddam Hussein’s attacks on Kurds and on

Marsh Arabs were mass murder, according to Goldhagen. U.S. attacks on Iraqis are “legitimate.” And, presumably, the assistance the U.S. gave in killing Kurds and the role of Operation Desert Storm in creating conditions for the killing of Marsh Arabs were legitimate or somehow irrelevant.

In the end, Goldhagen does not succeed in making a case that ending war should be a lower priority than ending mass murder, because war is in fact a type of mass murder. War is the most acceptable, respectable, and widest spread form of mass-murder around. Making war unacceptable would be a huge step in the direction of making all killing unacceptable. Keeping war in place as a “legitimate” foreign policy tool guarantees that mass murder will continue.

“Disturbed in 1942,” wrote Lawrence S. Wittner, “by rumors of Nazi extermination plans, Jessie Wallace Hughan worried that such a policy, which appeared ‘natural, from their pathological point of view,’ might be carried out if World War II continued. ‘It seems that the only way to save thousands and perhaps millions of European Jews from destruction,’ she wrote, ‘would be for our government to broadcast the promise’ of an ‘armistice on condition that the European minorities are not molested any further. . . . It would be very terrible if six months from now we should find that this threat has literally come to pass without our making even a gesture to prevent it.’ When her predictions were fulfilled only too well by 1943, she wrote to the State Department and the *New York Times*, decrying the fact that ‘two million [Jews] have already died’ and that ‘two million more will be killed by the end of the war.’ Once again she pleaded for the cessation of hostilities, arguing that German military defeats would in turn exact reprisals upon the Jewish scapegoat. ‘Victory will not save them,’ she insisted,

‘for dead men cannot be liberated.’”

Hitler killed millions of Germans and others in a program of genocide, but his armies killed a greater number of Soviet soldiers in battle, and the Allies killed a greater number of Germans than Hitler did. And, as Hughan pointed out at the time, the war drove the genocide, just as the vengeful settlement of the previous war a quarter century before had fueled the hostility, the scapegoating, and the rise of Hitlerism.

If we excuse war by trying to distinguish it from mass murder, we will end up failing to know about cases of mass murder. That is the current situation in the United States with our ignorance about Iraq.⁵⁴



WHERE WE'RE HEADED

IRAQ'S FUTURE: Worse Times Ahead

What news coverage there was in the United States of conditions in Iraq has dropped off these past few years. While the dramatic escalation of violence that for several years was predicted would accompany any U.S. withdrawal did not materialize, Iraq is not at peace. Violence is still a part of life, and it may worsen in the months or years ahead.⁵⁵ Sectarian divisions that developed during the war remain very much in place.⁵⁶ The war destabilized Iraq internally, created regional tensions, and -- of course

-- generated widespread resentment for the United States. That was the opposite result of the stated one of making the United States safer.

“On this 10th anniversary of the Iraq War,” Peter Van Buren remarks, “Iraq itself remains, by any measure, a dangerous and unstable place. Even the usually sunny Department of State advises American travelers to Iraq that U.S. citizens ‘remain at risk for kidnapping... [as] numerous insurgent groups, including Al Qaida, remain active...’ and notes that ‘State Department guidance to U.S. businesses in Iraq advises the use of Protective Security Details.’ In the bigger picture, the world is also a far more dangerous place than it was in 2003. Indeed, for the State Department, which sent me to Iraq to witness the follies of empire, the world has become ever more daunting. In 2003, at that infamous ‘mission accomplished’ moment, only Afghanistan was on the list of overseas embassies that were considered ‘extreme danger posts.’ Soon enough, however, Iraq and Pakistan were added. Today, Yemen and Libya, once boring but secure outposts for State’s officials, now fall into the same category. Other places once considered safe for diplomats and their families such as Syria and Mali have been evacuated and have no American diplomatic presence at all. Even sleepy Tunisia, once calm enough that the State Department had its Arabic language school there, is now on reduced staff with no diplomatic family members resident. Egypt teeters.⁵⁷

Worse may be yet to come, according to Patrick Cockburn:⁵⁸ “Iraq is disintegrating as a country under the pressure of a mounting political, social and economic crisis, say Iraqi leaders. They add that 10 years after the US invasion and occupation the conflict between the three main communities -- Shia, Sunni and Kurd -- is deepening to a point just short of

civil war. . . . The US and the UK have sought to play down overwhelming evidence that their invasion and occupation has produced one of the most dysfunctional and crooked governments in the world. Iraq has been violent and unstable for so long that Iraqis and foreigners alike have become desensitised to omens suggesting that, bad as the situation has been, it may be about to get a great deal worse. . . . In Baghdad there is scarcely a new civilian building to be seen and most of the new construction is heavily fortified police or military outposts. In Basra, at the heart of the oilfields, there are pools of sewage and heaps of uncollected rubbish in the streets on which herds of goats forage. . . . Theft of public money and incompetence on a gargantuan scale means the government fails to provide adequate electricity, clean water or sanitation. One-third of the labour force is unemployed and, when you include those under-employed, the figure is over half. Even those who do have a job have often obtained it by bribery. ‘I feared seven or eight years ago that Iraq would become like Nigeria,’ says one former minister, ‘but in fact it is far worse.’ He cited as evidence a \$1.3bn contract for an electricity project signed by a minister with a Canadian company that had only a nominal existence -- and a German company that was bankrupt.”

Cockburn writes that, while violence is down dramatically since 2007, “Baghdad and central Iraq remains one of the most dangerous places on earth in terms of bombings, assassinations and kidnappings.”

And the Spread of Democracy may have somehow been spread with the wrong sort of knife: “The rule of Nouri al-Maliki, Prime Minister since 2006, has become a near dictatorship with highly developed means of repression, such as secret prisons, and pervasive use of torture. He has sought to monopolise

control over the army, intelligence service, government apparatus and budget, making sure that his supporters get the lion's share of jobs and contracts." Of course, this "democracy" was U.S.-made, and even though U.S. troops have departed, U.S. appointees like Maliki remain. "Why is the corruption in Iraq so bad? The simple answer that Iraqis give is that 'UN sanctions destroyed Iraqi society in the 1990s and the Americans destroyed the Iraqi state after 2003'."

Cockburn does manage to find one bright spot: "If an Iraqi was arrested before 2003 for a political offence he could expect to be tortured unless he immediately confessed, and this is still the case. The one improvement is that he stands less chance of being executed."

But according to Amnesty International, he still stands a pretty good chance of being executed:⁵⁹ "The death penalty was suspended after the 2003 invasion but quickly restored by the first Iraqi government on coming to power, and executions resumed in 2005. Since then, at least 447 prisoners have been executed, including Saddam Hussein, some of his main associates, and alleged members of armed groups. Hundreds of prisoners await execution on death row. Iraq, where 129 prisoners were hanged in 2012, is now one of the world's leading executioners." There's also the torture: "as Amnesty International's report shows, torture and other abuse of detainees has been one of the most persistent and widespread features of Iraq's human rights landscape, and the government shows little inclination either to recognize its extent or take the measures necessary to consign such grave abuses to the past."

The situation for Kurds in northern Iraq is in some ways better than in Baghdad, but precarious. One important question

to be answered regards the Kurds' relationship with Turkey, which reportedly sent 15 F-16 fighter jets to bomb the area in February.⁶⁰

On March 11, 2013, the Associated Press reported on another force moving into Iraq to fill the “gap” supposedly left by the U.S. military. This new force is the CIA, which the AP reports is “ramping up support to elite Iraqi antiterrorism units to better fight al Qaeda affiliates, amid alarm in Washington about spillover from the civil war in neighboring Syria, according to U.S. officials.” Al Qaeda in Iraq, which did not exist prior to OIL, has “close ties” to Jabhat al Nusra in Syria. According to the AP, “U.S. intelligence agencies believe al Qaeda in Iraq has provided a steady stream of fighters to work with al Nusra.”

LIES: The Worst Ones Come After a War

Lies are told before, during, and after wars, and it is those told after that teach future generations that wars are acceptable. Without lies about past wars, future wars would never be contemplated at all, not even as “a last resort.” Without lies about World War II and its predecessors, there would have been no war on Korea or Vietnam. Without lies about those conflicts, there would have been no wars since. Not to minimize the importance of exposing the lies told just prior to a new war, we need to recognize that those lies stand on the shoulders of all the accumulated myths and disinformation about previous wars. When President Obama escalated the war on Afghanistan, he claimed that an escalation in Iraq had been a success. The Pentagon is investing \$65 million right now in a “Vietnam Commemoration Project” to transform that catastrophe into a noble cause. OIL is also being

beautified as we speak.

Here's David Frum on March 5, 2013, telling a few:⁶¹ "It was often said that the Iraq war would serve only to strengthen Iran. . . . Today, however, the claim 'Iran won' looks a lot more dubious. The Iraq war has led to a huge shift in regional oil production. Iraq is returning to world oil markets, massively. Last year Iraq produced more oil than in any year since the first Gulf War. By some estimates, Iraq will soon overtake Russia as the world's number-two oil exporter. Iran meanwhile has dropped out of the top 10 oil-exporting countries. Iraq's return to world oil markets has enabled the sanctions that have pushed Iran out. If Iraq were still ruled by Saddam Hussein, it's hard to imagine that the western world would dare take its present hard line against Iran. And of course, if Saddam Hussein had remained in power after 2003, he too would have had the benefit of \$100/barrel with which to finance his regime's military ambitions."

The war on Iraq is here justified because it has facilitated threatening war on Iran and sanctioning Iran, as well as because a failure to remove Saddam Hussein would mean that he would still be around, unless perhaps the United States had never supported him in the first place. Frum continues:

"The war was expensive and badly managed. It did real damage to the international credibility of the United States It left 4,000 Americans dead and many thousands more seriously wounded. Had we known all this in advance, the war would not have been fought. But it would be wrong to say the war achieved nothing. And it's wrong to shut our eyes to the ugly consequences of leaving Saddam in power."

Doing so might distract us from shutting our eyes to the ugly consequences of our sociocide.

Bill Bigelow, Curriculum Editor of *Rethinking Schools*, which has just released a book called *Teaching About the Wars*,⁶² writes: “Now, as we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, our wars in the Middle East have moved from the front pages of our newspapers to the insides of our textbooks. The huge corporations that produce those texts have no interest in nurturing the kind of critical thought that might generate questions about today’s vast inequalities of wealth and power -- or, for that matter, about the interventionist policies of our government. Exhibit A is Holt McDougal’s *Modern World History* on the U.S. war with Iraq, which might as well have been written by Pentagon propagandists. Maybe it was. In an imitation of Fox News, the very first sentence of the Iraq war section mentions the 9/11 attacks and Saddam Hussein side by side. The book presents the march to invasion as reasonable and inevitable, while acknowledging: ‘Some countries, France and Germany, called for letting the inspectors continue searching for weapons.’ That’s the only hint of any opposition to war, despite the fact that there was enormous popular opposition to the war, culminating on February 15, 2003, the date which saw millions of people around the world demand that the United States not invade Iraq -- if you’re keeping track, this was the largest protest in human history, according to the *Guinness Book of World Records*.

“This, of course, is a pattern in corporate textbooks: Conflate governments with the people; ignore social movements. After a quick and bloodless description of the fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime, the textbook’s final section is headlined ‘The Struggle Continues.’ It begins: ‘Despite the coalition victory,

much work remained in Iraq.’ The only thing missing from this rah-rah section is the confetti: ‘With the help of U.S. officials, Iraqis began rebuilding their nation.’ Oh, is that how it happened? Significantly, there is no Iraqi quoted in the entire section -- itself one of the most powerful lessons here. It’s a primer in legitimating imperialism: the violent and squabbling Third World others get no say; we will decide what’s good for them. In a mockery of the term ‘critical,’ the chapter closes with four ‘Critical Thinking & Writing’ exercises. Here is the sole ‘critical writing’ activity: ‘Imagine you are a speechwriter for President Bush. Write the introductory paragraph of a speech to coalition forces after their victory in Iraq.’”

RULE OF LAW: Was it Killed in Action?

The Kellogg-Briand Pact, which bans war, has been forgotten. The U.N. Charter has been shredded through a combination of distortion and blatant violation. The U.S. Constitution and the War Powers Act have been shoved aside with authorizations, not of particular wars, but of the power to launch particular types of wars at the president’s own whim. The vague authorization passed three days after 9/11 and the one passed a year later specifically for Iraq are both still on the books. President Bush’s successor, building on what he was able to get away with, now openly launches wars against the will of Congress (as in Libya) and in violation of the actual wording of UN resolutions (as in Libya), spies without warrants, imprisons without charges or trials, renditions prisoners to nations that torture, claims the power to torture if “needed,” and goes through a list of men, women, and children on Tuesdays picking out which ones to try to murder.

The damage to the rule of law, the militarization of the globe, the upsurge in weapons sales from the United States to other nations, the new paradigm of purely lawless missile strikes and night raids: these may turn out to be the most significant result of OIL and the G.W.O.T. it has been part of.

The coarsening of U.S. culture is almost incomprehensible. It's difficult to remember that 15 years ago Americans did not accept the idea of warrantless spying or a death camp in Cuba or "enhanced interrogations" in which the "enhancements" sometimes lead to the death of the interrogated individuals. If President Bill Clinton had proposed Terror Tuesday meetings on the Barack Obama model he would have been impeached whether he'd kept his pants zipped or not, and he would have been convicted. Following the Bush-Cheney era, the range of acceptable behavior for Obama has been stretched to encompass virtually all imaginable evil.

Not just acceptance of torture is on the rise in the United States and the world it influences. Also on the rise is bigotry, particularly toward Muslims. Of course, those engaging in such habits of thought don't always recognize it. During World War I, Bertrand Russell remarked: "When the war broke out, all the reactionaries in England and France began to speak of the danger to democracy, although until that moment they had opposed democracy with all their strength. They were not insincere in so speaking: the impulse of resistance to Germany made them value whatever was endangered by the German attack. They loved democracy because they hated Germany; but they thought they hated Germany because they loved democracy." Similarly, Americans today find themselves loving their flag and their military and anything they're told goes with that,

because of their hatred of “the terrorists,” “those people,” and “Islamic extremism.”

The exposure of the lies that launched OIL, understood by 57% of Americans, is a significant silver lining that has helped to prevent a war on Iran thus far. But understanding that Iraq was lied about can coexist in a human brain with bigotry toward the people of Iraq or of all of Western Asia or of all Muslim areas of the world or of all the world outside the United States. Just as U.S. wars can be promoted both as attacks on evil beings and as humanitarian aid to foreigners, racism and hatred and fear can coexist -- regardless of logic -- with exposure of lies that generated the fear and hatred. Iraqi culture has been damaged, but so has U.S.ian. Children who were eight in 2003 are now adults. They have never known a world without the current level of fear mongering. They don't remember flying on airplanes without being suspected of plotting mass murder. The phrase “home land” doesn't strike them as bizarre or fascistic but as perfectly inevitable.

Former Congresswoman Liz Holtzman remarked this week, as she has before, that the failure of the U.S. Congress to hold President Richard Nixon accountable for his crimes of war has had repercussions down to the current day. But that failure was not complete. Articles of impeachment related to the war were seriously considered. Nixon was about to be impeached for other abuses when he resigned. The War Powers Act and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act were created. And something called the Vietnam Syndrome was implanted in the culture, which meant a reluctance to get into another war as awful as that one.

In contrast, during the G.W.O.T., the Democratic leadership

in Congress promised not to impeach President George W. Bush no matter what he did. Every law passed has expanded rather than constraining or even gesturing in the direction of constraining presidential power. The result is a White House that admits to no limitations on its power whatsoever, not even including restrictions on its freedom to murder U.S. citizens without judicial or legislative interference.

Mike Ferner met a local sheik near Balad who told of his experience while in U.S. Army detention. After detailing some pretty horrible experiences and becoming more and more agitated, he said in tears, “I know the American people are not the same as the American government. But you say you live in a democracy. How could this happen to us?” How indeed?

TWO WAYS TO GO

The trade-offs need to be borne in mind as we hear the drums beat for another war. We need the resources elsewhere. And the damage done by another war will be closer to the reality of the last one than to the pleasant scenarios of corporate television’s imagination. So-called “surgical” strikes on Iran are not just likely to lead to an escalated war, but also to themselves kill between 12,000 and 70,000 people,⁶³ if not many more.⁶⁴ That’s one way to go.

Another way to go involves making reparations to Iraq for the damage done. This ought to be a central demand of the peace movement. Iraq was forced to make reparations to Kuwait.⁶⁵ If another nation destroyed the United States, reparations would be the first thought on our minds.

A sense of how we should be thinking can be found in a book called *The Gospel of Rutba* by Greg Barrett. In March 2003, Kathy Kelly and a group of U.S. peace makers were in Iraq to be with the victims of Shock and Awe when it happened, and in hopes of helping to prevent it. On March 28th they were ordered out of the country. On March 29th a taxi carrying three U.S. and one Korean peace activists crashed an hour east of the border with Jordan, near the Iraqi town of Rutba.

Iraqis traveling the other way on the highway did not pass by the accident. As they journeyed, they came where the peace activists lay; and when they saw them, they had compassion on them and went to them, and bound up their wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set them on their own beast and brought them to an inn and took care of them.

Except for the oil and wine part. Instead it was clothing and tourniquets, and the beast was an automobile. The Iraqis took the Americans to Rutba, even as the U.S. military bombed Iraq. The rescuers could not take the injured to the hospital, as it had already been destroyed that week by U.S. bombs. (It remains destroyed today.) The Iraqis took the Americans to a makeshift clinic, where Iraqi doctors and nurses saved their lives, including the life of one of them in extremely critical condition.

Go forth and do likewise.

##

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(Endnotes)

1 While the U.S. has typically paid \$0 to \$5,000 dollars as compensation for an Iraqi life, (see <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article18576.htm>) the State Department and Blackwater arrived at the figure of \$15,000, (see <http://scienceblogs.com/authority/2007/10/08/how-much-is-an-iraqi-life-worth>). At the same time, the lowest government value for a U.S. life was \$5 million assigned by the Food and Drug Administration, (see <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/17/business/economy/17regulation.html?pagewanted=all>).

2 <http://davidswanson.org/node/3857>

3 <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines06/0228-09.htm>

4 See my book *War Is A Lie*.

5 Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, (Viking, New York, 2011).

6 A more accurate figure may be 800,000. See below.

7 John Tirman, *The Deaths of Others: The Fate of Civilians in America's Wars*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011), p. 255.

8 See, e.g., Edward S. Herman and David Peterson, *The Politics of Genocide* (Monthly Review Press, 2nd. Ed, 2011) pp. 104-105. And on the case of Neda Agha-Soltan, see Edward S. Herman and David Peterson, "Legitimizing versus Delegitimizing Elections," in Gerald Sussman, *The Propaganda Society* (Peter Lang, 2011), pp. 203-207; Edward S. Herman and David Peterson, "Iran and Honduras in the Propaganda System, Part 1: Neda Agha-Soltan Versus Isis Obed Murillo," MRZine, October 5, 2010; and David Peterson, "Iran and Honduras in the Propaganda System," ZNet, October 24, 2012.)

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- 12 <http://news.brown.edu/pressreleases/2013/03/warcosts>
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- 15 <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG720.html>
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- 18 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/2950837.stm>
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- 30 <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/iraq-records-huge-rise-in-birth-defects-8210444.html>
- 31 http://www.fpfif.org/articles/the_under-examined_story_of_fallujah
- 32 <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/commentators/fisk/robert-fisk-the-children-of-fallujah--the-hospital-of-horrors-7679168.html>
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- 34 [http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-202_162-57572748/much-of-\\$60b-from-u.s-to-rebuild-iraq-wasted-special-auditors-final-report-to-congress-shows](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-202_162-57572748/much-of-$60b-from-u.s-to-rebuild-iraq-wasted-special-auditors-final-report-to-congress-shows)
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49 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kpWqdPMjmo>

50 See discussion in my book, *War Is A Lie*.

51 Edward Herman, in a communication to me, points out that Pinker uses as “a source for mass deaths a rightwing nut like Rudolf Rummel but never cites Amartya Sen, who makes the case that mass deaths from built-in capitalist structures can exceed those of holocausts that Pinker and Rummel prefer (and inflate and misrepresent).”

52 For a useful reply to Pinker, see “Reality Denial: Steven Pinker’s Apologetics for Western Imperial Violence,” by Edward S. Herman and David Peterson, <http://www.zcommunications.org/reality-denial-steven-pinkers-apologetics-for-western-imperial-volence-by-edward-s-herman-and-david-peterson-1>

53 <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/01/30/savaging-primitives-why-jared-diamond-s-the-world-until-yesterday-is-completely-wrong.html>

54 David Peterson in a communication to me: “When I observe the explosion in the so-called field of genocide studies over the past 20 or so years, I cannot help but conclude that we should regard this as something of a genocide-studies industry, complete with opportunity to acquire PhDs in ‘genocide studies’ (and the like) and the institutionalization of best-programs at which to acquire them, national and international organizations and conferences devoted to ‘genocide studies,’ inclusion in and exclusion from the field as defined and enforced by practitioners dedicated to making these judgments stick, and so on.” Peterson goes on to note that what counts as a genocide is largely determined by whether the perpetrator was, on the one hand, the United States or one of its allies, or on the other hand, anybody else.

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