

The Real Costs of War

by Paul Ropp (propp@clarku.edu)

The United States of America was born in the Revolutionary War, expanded in a whole series of war 19th-century wars, reconceived in the great Civil War, and involved in more wars in the 20th and 21st centuries than any other nation.ⁱ Given the central importance of wars in our history, the interpretation of our wars is central to the definition of what it means to be an American. War is perhaps the most emotionally charged event in any nation's history, and the survivors of every war must deal with memories of young loved ones now dead, and with countless tales of heroic sacrifices of their countrymen's lives, whether in celebration of victory or in the despair of defeat. Given the emotional weight attached to war, to its veterans and its survivors, it is almost impossible to think about wars, especially our own wars, with clarity and dispassion. Consequently, we always feel compelled to rationalize our wars, to celebrate them, and to emphasize their absolute and utter necessity. As a result, we seldom learn the lessons we should from our wars, and we never fully recognize or acknowledge their cost, not only in financial terms, but in social, psychological and moral terms as well. That's what I want to talk about today. **[#2 List of America's Wars]**

The United States is a product of the great age of imperialism. Our Revolutionary War was anti-imperialist only in the very narrow sense of opposing British control and winning freedom for white Protestant male property owners. The subsequent War of 1812, the Mexican-American War of 1846-48, the many Indian wars of the 19th century, and the Spanish-American War of 1898, were all conventional imperialist wars for territory and resources. The American Civil War was also fought to assert and extend the power of the state, in this case, the

power to prevent secession of the southern states of the Confederacy. Taken all together, these 19th century wars strengthened the power of the federal government, extended its rule across the North American continent and on into the Pacific with the acquisition of Hawaii in 1893 and the Philippines in 1898. **[#3 World War I]**

Wars are extreme events and they inspire extreme acts and extreme responses. For no moral purpose, save an international competition for power, World War I produced a massive slaughter on an industrial scale as some 5 million allied troops and 3.3 million troops of the Central Powers lost their lives. Another 5 million civilians were killed. But the cost of World War I went far beyond the total expense of approximately \$337 billion and over 13 million deaths. World War I greatly facilitated the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the Armenian genocide in the crumbling Ottoman Empire. **[# 4 Armenian Genocide]** The horrors of Stalinist Russia—including tens of millions dead from starvation, forced labor, and execution—can also be seen as another of the costs of World War I. **[# 5 Bolshevik Revolution]**

As disastrous as World War I was in the fighting, it was even more disastrous in the aftermath. At the Versailles Peace Conference, the allies ignored Woodrow Wilson's call for a non-victorious peace, and chose to punish the German people, thereby helping facilitate Adolf Hitler's rise to power. It is common knowledge today that the settlement of World War I only stirred new resentments, brought about a worldwide economic depression, and led directly and quickly to the rise of fascism in Germany, Italy and Japan, and to World War II.

[#6 Birth of Chinese Communism] When the Western democracies at Versailles award former German territory in China directly to Japan, it led to anti-Western demonstrations in China and the birth of the Chinese Communist Party. **[# 7 Costs of WWI]** In carving up the Ottoman

Empire, the British and French created the arbitrary boundaries of the Middle East, in order to create unstable combinations of disparate peoples (such as Kurds, Sunnis and Shi'ites in Iraq) partly to insure that those unstable countries would invite, and not be able to resist, repeated Western intervention. In British Field Marshall Earl Wavell's prophetic phrase, the victorious allies in the aftermath of World War I created "a Peace to end all peace."ⁱⁱ It is no exaggeration to say that the roots of today's ethnic, religious, political, economic and military conflicts in the Middle East, the most troubled spot on earth, can rightly be seen as yet another high cost of World War I.

If World War I produced the Armenian genocide and the Bolshevik Revolution, the birth of the Chinese Communist Party, and it sped the rise of Japan as an imperial power in East Asia. **[# 8 Nanjing Massacre]** World War II began with Japan's invasion of China in 1937 and the Nanjing Massacre in which Japanese troops killed 200 to 300,000 civilians in six weeks' time in late 1937 and early 1938. **[# 9 World War II]** The harsh settlement imposed on Germany after World War I led directly to the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party, and the state of total war in Europe gave Hitler his chance to carry out the Holocaust, killing 12 million Jews, Slavs, Gypsies, Catholics, homosexuals and other so-called undesirables. **[# 10 Holocaust]** Only in a state of total war could Hitler and the Nazis carry out the Holocaust. World War II didn't prevent the Holocaust; rather it allowed and facilitated the Holocaust. As the greatest military clash in world history, World War II claimed the lives of 60 to 80 million people, 3 to 4% of the entire population of the world. And of those 60 to 80 million deaths, over half were civilian non-combatants. **[# 11 Civilians Targeted in WWII]** One of the unnoticed costs of World War II was the erasure of the previously important distinction between combatant deaths and civilian

deaths. When the Spanish government first bombed civilian populations in the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s, there was an outcry against such a clear violation of the civilized rules of warfare. But in the heat of World War II, all sides began to bomb civilian populations with impunity, as part of the necessary effort to weaken the enemy's will to fight. **[# 12 Cartoon on Collateral Damage]**

Eric Markusen estimates that in World War I, soldiers accounted for 95% of the deaths in the war and civilians accounted for only 5% (though I think the correct figure must be closer to 30%). In World War II, civilians accounted for 60% of all deaths. In Korea, Vietnam and other wars of the 1970s and '80s, the percentage of civilians killed rose to 70% or 80% as the use of airpower became ever more sophisticated and lethal.ⁱⁱⁱ In the recent and still on-going Iraq war is it estimated that civilians have accounted for 90% of the deaths. This is partly because the weaker parties in insurgencies compensate for their military weakness with booby traps, car bombs and improvised explosive devices that kill indiscriminately. Victims of military and colonial invasion have always resorted to surprise attacks and "terror" because they can't possibly win a conventional military confrontation. And because the more technologically advanced invading power gets easily frustrated by the invisible foe that blends in with the native population, it invariably takes revenge on the local populace and kills far more civilians than do the guerrillas and insurgents. In such asymmetrical wars where 70% to 90% of the deaths are civilian, how can anyone make a serious claim that these wars are just in any sense of the word? In our techno wars of today, pitting the world's only superpower against poor villagers, and using drones to bomb "targets of opportunity" in remote mountains, the concept of a just war has become an oxymoron. **[13# World War I Cartoon]**

One of the world's leading scholars of genocide, Leo Kuper, noticed this problem already in 1981:

The changing nature of warfare, with a movement toward total warfare, and the technological means for the annihilation of large populations, creates a situation conducive to genocidal conflict. This potential was realized in the Second World War, when Germany employed genocide in its war for domination, but I think it also must be applied to the atomic bombing of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the U.S.A. and to the pattern bombing by the Allies of such cities as Hamburg and Dresden.^{iv}

World Wars I and II were the wholly natural result of the age of imperialism in which the Western powers conquered, enslaved and exploited the non-industrialized non-Western nations of the world. The Western carnage of those wars weakened all the Western powers except America, making it impossible to sustain Western control of its colonies after 1945. More importantly, World Wars I and II utterly destroyed the moral rationale for Western imperialism, that the Western dominance of the world was a reflection of its moral superiority, giving it the right to conquer the non-West in order to modernize, Christianize, Westernize, and improve non-Western nations. Ironically, just as the non-West rose up to throw off the yoke of the West, the United States emerged on the scene unscathed from WWII, feeling innocent of Western imperialist sins and ready to assume the role of the former British empire as the military guarantor of world peace, trade and prosperity.

The combination of a century and a half of Western colonial oppression and the self-destruction of most Western colonial powers in World War II led directly to strong communist movements in China, Korea, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, and indirectly to the Korean and Indochinese wars. **[# 14 Chinese Communist Revolution]** World War II, more than any other

factor, brought Mao Zedong to power in China. Mao was a soldier above all else, and his militaristic approach to building a modern communist state, his war-inspired radicalism, led to at least 30 million (possibly more than 40 million) deaths in the Great Leap Forward (1958-61) and millions more persecuted and killed in the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). **[# 15 Costs of WWII]**

In light of the slaughter of World War II (60-80 million deaths), in light of the Holocaust made possible by World War II, in light of the Asian Communist Revolutions resulting from World War II, and in light of the resulting Soviet domination of eastern Europe for over four decades because of World War II, it is hard to see how World War II can be called a Good War! That is like saying Hurricane Katrina was a good hurricane because it offered so many opportunities for heroic self-sacrifice.

After World War I it was clear to most Americans that the only beneficiaries of the Great War were the armaments makers, but after World War II, Americans made the opposite calculation, that only complete military supremacy over all other nations could bring the United States peace and security. At the very moment that World War II discredited Western imperialism and the idea of Western moral superiority in the entire non-Western world, World War II inspired in Americans a great faith in our own righteousness and in the value of warfare to resolve international disputes. We credited World War II with ending the Great Depression, and we built the world's largest military armaments industry to be a major pillar of our post-war economy. Becoming a superpower through our participation in World War II, and not suffering any of the consequences of modern warfare on our own soil, we have been blinded ever since to the real costs of war.

The Korean War (1950-53) and Vietnam Wars (1945-1975) also resulted from the division of the spoils at the conclusion of World War II and the resistance of Asian communists to continued Western dominance of their societies. **[# 16 Korean War]** According to Bruce Cumings in his new book, *The Korean War*, the US “carpet bombed the North for three years with next to no concern for civilian casualties.”^v **[# 17 Vietnam War]** In resorting to maximum air power in the Vietnam War, from 1965 to 1976 the United States dropped on the small countries of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia more than 6 times the tonnage of bombs as had been dropped in all theaters in World War II. We killed between one and two million Vietnamese, Laotians and Cambodians in that decade, all for mistaken assumptions resulting from a profound ignorance of Asian history. **[# 18 Cambodian Genocide]** More than any other factor, American bombs brought Pol Pot to power, and left him both powerful enough and embittered enough to kill another one to two million of his own Cambodian countrymen. **[# 19 Presidents with Troops]**

The European historian Tony Judt has observed that in the 20th century, the United States was the only country to prosper from its wars and to emerge wholly unscathed by any damage on its own soil. “As a consequence,” he writes.

the United States today is the only advanced country that still glorifies war and exalts the military, a sentiment familiar in Europe before 1945 but quite unknown today. America’s politicians and statesmen surround themselves with the symbols and trappings of armed prowess; its commentators mock and scorn countries that hesitate to engage themselves in armed conflict. It is this differential recollection of war and its impact, rather than any structural differences between the U. S. and otherwise comparable countries, which accounts for their contrasting responses to international affairs today.^{vi}

I believe the American lack of experience of war directly on our soil also accounts for our inability to perceive the real costs of war, and for our tendency to misread history so completely as to take precisely the wrong lessons from both the wars we have won and the ones we have lost. Let me illustrate this with some specific examples. **[# 20 First Casualty]**

“The first casualty of war is truth,” as the saying goes, and several of our important wars have been started on the basis of lies and distortions. Evan Thomas in his recent book, *The War Lovers*,^{vii} has shown that the Spanish-American War of 1898, clearly an imperialist war, resulted largely from the determination of Theodore Roosevelt, Henry Cabot Lodge, and William Randolph Hearst, to foment a war with Spain. As Thomas demonstrates, Roosevelt gloried in war and believed a war, any war, was necessary to toughen the United States, to cultivate a sharper sense of manliness, and to prepare the nation to assume an ever greater role in the world that had theretofore been dominated by European imperialists. Roosevelt was also instrumental in encouraging Japan to militarize and to join the Western powers in assuming control of the peoples and natural resources of Asia. The explosion of the Maine in Havana Harbor, we now know, was an internal explosion, but it was conveniently used by the Hearst newspapers to drum up American enthusiasm for a war against Spain. This fictional “attack” on an American ship is eerily reminiscent of the Gulf of Tonkin “attacks” on American ships in 1965, and the “weapons of mass destruction” in Iraq in 2003, both complete fictions, which led to thousands of American deaths and many hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese and Iraqi deaths in the resulting wars.^{viii} **[# 21 US Critics of War]**

Yet, because war is such an emotionally powerful event, only a minority, such notable exceptions as Mark Twain and the late Senators J. William Fulbright and Robert Byrd, have been

concerned about the lies used to start wars. Once a war begins, most Americans, like most people in most countries, rally to the flag, devote themselves to the cause of victory and forget the lie that motivated the first shot. After the fiasco of Vietnam, Americans were suspicious for a time of calls for war. Ronald Reagan was keen to help the nation forget that embarrassing defeat, but only the embarrassment of our defeat, not the embarrassment of destroying three small countries for no good reason. He confidently reassured the American people that “ours was a noble cause,” and he invaded Grenada in 1983 to show our power and distract the nation from our withdrawal from Lebanon after 200 marines were killed there by a truck bomb. It was left to George H. W. Bush to kick “the Vietnam syndrome” with the Persian Gulf War against Saddam Hussein in 1990-91.

I want to be clear that I am not challenging the morality or the courage or the valor of American’s armed forces, or the necessity of occasional police actions to stop ethnic cleansings or genocides. I am challenging the policy makers who have made war an essential part of America’s approach to international relations; who have used wars not to promote freedom but only to project American power. **[# 22 US & Saudi Monarchy]** We nurtured and supported a reactionary Muslim regime in Saudi Arabia, for the sake of access to its oil, and our stationing troops on Saudi soil in the Persian Gulf War brought us the alienated Saudis who became the terrorists of 9/11. **[# 23 US & Shah of Iran]** We intervened in Iran in 1953 to overthrow a democratic government and to install a pro-American Shah whose repression, regular use of torture, and dependence on American support eventually produced the militant Islamic reaction in Iran that overthrew the Shah in 1979 and is still in power today. **[# 24 Iraq War]** Our invasion of Iran’s traditional rival, Iraq, in 2003, has given Iran more power and influence in

the Middle East than at any time in recent history. The threat of Iran today is a direct product of American military actions over the past half century. **[# 25 Costs of Iraq War]**

In the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attack of 9/11, mostly by Saudi terrorists, the Bush administration quickly moved to prepare to invade Iraq, with little attention to the possible horrific consequences (all of which were predicted by many informed specialists in Middle Eastern history and diplomacy). Linda Bilmes and Joseph Stiglitz, in the most detailed study available of the financial implications of the Iraq war, have estimated the total costs of this still unfinished war, at \$3 trillion (that is 3 million million dollars), and they suggest that adding in the interminable war in Afghanistan, and the fact that both wars are financed with borrowed money, the costs rise to \$7 trillion.^{ix}

Our reckless invasion of Iraq with no attention to the maintenance of civil order following the invasion, created such havoc and destroyed so much infrastructure that an estimated 1.7 million Iraqis have been forced to relocate within Iraq and another 2 million, representing 40% of the best educated professional classes, have fled the country.^x **[# 26 Iraqi Refugees]** When a country loses its physical infrastructure and its professional class as a result of foreign invasion, the reconstruction of a prosperous and stable society becomes almost impossible. The creation of millions of refugees is yet another high and often overlooked cost of war. **[# 27 Iraq War Photos]**

We delude ourselves, like all warring states, to think our adversaries are simply incarnations of evil who understand and respect only military force. The truth is far different. Imagine our cities occupied by non-English speaking troops with no knowledge of our history or culture; imagine martial law in our cities where those troops have the absolute right to enter

our homes, destroy our property, stop us and search our cars, delay us for hours at checkpoints on our streets and shoot us at will if we ever fail to obey their commands shouted in foreign language we don't understand. We would quickly become the world's leading producer of terrorists.

Our adversaries are the products of their history just as we are products of our history. Because of the intense psychological pressures of warfare, adversaries in wars soon become mirror images of each other. This has been true throughout history and it remains true today. As long as we are blind to the value and dignity of every person, including poor villagers who take up arms against our soldiers on their land, we will not make ourselves or the world safe and secure. The rise of suicide bombers is not some unprecedented development in world history. Weak adversaries in warfare have always resorted to suicide missions to compensate for their weakness. And occupiers of all nations have always faced guerrilla tactics among occupied peoples. A 2006 study by the Cato Institute revealed that 70% of all suicide bombers are motivated primarily by resistance to military occupation on their own soil.^{xi} It is absurd to think one can promote democracy through the barrel of a gun; it is absurd to believe our military invasions are liberating to anyone; they imprison occupiers and occupied alike; and it is absurd to think that war ever leads to peace.

I want to be clear, in conclusion, that my critique is a critique of American military and diplomatic policies, not of American soldiers who risk their lives with much courage and valor.

[# 28 Sebastian Junger] No journalist has more respect for our troops in Afghanistan than Sebastian Junger, and in his recent book entitled, simply, *War*, he eloquently documents the cost of our adventure there to those brave men who now for almost nine years, suffer daily

deaths and horrific injuries. “There are other costs to war as well,” Junger writes **[# 29**

Sebastian Junger Quote]

vaguer ones that don’t lend themselves to conventional math. One American soldier has died for every hundred yards of forward progress in the [Korengal] valley [in eastern Afghanistan], but what about the survivors? Is that territory worth the psychological cost of learning to cheer someone’s death? It’s an impossible question to answer but one that should keep getting asked.... As for the sense of purpose, combat is it—the only game in town. Almost none of the things that make life feel worth living back home are present at Restrepo [the outpost where Junger was imbedded with American troops off and on for a year] so the entire range of a young man’s self worth has to be found within the ragged choreography of a firefight. The men talk about it and dream about it and rehearse for it and analyze it afterward but never plumb its depths enough to lose interest. It’s the ultimate test, and some of the men worry they’ll never be satisfied with “normal life” —whatever that is—after the amount of combat they’ve been in. They worry that they may have been ruined for anything else.^{xii}

There are now, on average, about 200 suicides a year of veterans of the Iraq and Afghan wars.

Self-destruction of our own young fighting men and women is yet another undeniable cost of war, and it is difficult to read Junger’s book as anything other than a tragedy. **[# 30 Martin**

Luther King at Riverside Church]

In April, 1967 Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke out against the Vietnam War at Riverside Church in New York City. Many civil rights leaders urged him to ignore the war in order to avoid controversy and concentrate on civil rights alone. King rejected that advice as completely contradictory to the whole thrust and purpose of his life ministry. At Riverside Church he pointed out the way that war robbed America of any hope of addressing the pressing problems of poverty and racism in our own land. **[# 31 Martin Luther King Quote]**

Since I am a preacher by trade, I suppose it is not surprising that I have seven major reasons for bringing Vietnam into the field of my moral vision. There is at the outset a very obvious and almost facile connection between the war in Vietnam and the struggle I, and others, have been waging in America. A few years ago there was a shining moment in that struggle. It seemed as if there was a real promise of hope for the poor - both black and white -- through the poverty program. There were experiments, hopes, new beginnings. Then came the buildup in Vietnam and I watched the program broken and eviscerated as if it were some idle political plaything of a society gone mad on war, and I knew that America would never invest the necessary funds or energies in rehabilitation of its poor so long as adventures like Vietnam continued to draw men and skills and money like some demonic destructive suction tube. So I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.^{xiii}

King's entire critique of the Vietnam War in 1967, on our violation of common Christian principles, on our misplaced faith in high-tech killing, on our self-defeating ignorance of our adversaries, applies almost verbatim to our wars today in Iraq and Afghanistan. For every American soldier we station in Afghanistan for one year, we spend an average of one million dollars. For the cost of just a few of these soldiers, we could educate every girl in Afghanistan, a far more effective investment in that country and in our national security. Though we superficially honor Martin Luther King, Jr. with a holiday in his name, we disgrace his memory with our military spending and our unquestioned faith in military force. **[# 32 Poisoning Politics]**

A final cost of war in the United States is that it poisons our domestic politics. Presidents often go to war to rally public opinion behind the party in power (as with Reagan in Grenada or George W. Bush in Iraq), or they perpetuate even unnecessary wars for fear of being branded losers who betrayed the sacrifice of those already killed in the war (as with Lyndon Johnson in Vietnam). In the heat of war, criticism and dissent gets branded as

traitorous, and clear headed analysis becomes impossible. The jingoist atmosphere of wartime makes understanding the enemy impossible, and self-understanding unlikely. It is no coincidence, I believe, that we feel less secure as a nation today than we did through most of the 20th century. In fact, our security and economic anxieties today are riling up our domestic politics with new levels of fear and hatred not seen since the heyday of the Red Scare and the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s. This domestic politics of fear and hatred is yet another cost of our incessant wars. **[# 33 Global Arms Expenditures]**

Today, according to the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation, we and our NATO allies account for 64% of world military spending. Our military spending has not given us peace and security, but war after war after war, and an unsustainable national debt. **[# 34 General Eisenhower, 1945]** President Eisenhower, the great World War II general and two-term Republican President, warned in 1961, in the midst of the Cold War, against what he called the “military industrial complex” and the potentially disastrous misuse of military power. **[# 35 Eisenhower’s Warning]** Today Eisenhower’s words would get any American politician branded as a dangerous left-wing extremist. That fact alone demonstrates the wisdom of Eisenhower’s warning. Our politics has been so polluted with militaristic fervor that the only public voice calling for serious cuts in the military budget today has been that of Robert Gates, the Secretary of Defense! **[# 36 Human Sacrifice]**

Primitive peoples believed in human sacrifice, whether of enemy troops, rival tribesmen, slaves, or virgin girls; they assumed the killing of these people would win protection of the gods or some divine forces. This has been a powerful motif throughout human history, and it is just as dangerous, just as dehumanizing, just as superstitious, and just as prevalent today as it was

when humans lived only in caves. I believe it is time to declare our opposition to human sacrifice. More killing will never make us more safe and secure. Breaking down the doors of civilians at gunpoint will never win us their gratitude. Drone strikes on remote poor villages will never bring us the security we seek. Backing corrupt governments only because they allow our troops on their soil, will never make us safe and secure. **No one likes foreign troops on their soil.** We started the American Revolution over that basic fact, but have long since forgotten its truth only because we can't even imagine what a military occupation is like for those occupied.

The great master of military strategy, the ancient Chinese philosopher Sun Zi, noted 2500 years ago that the greatest victory is the victory won without fighting. You don't have to be a pacifist to recognize the self-defeating limits of military power to provide peace and security. We have tried war as a first option much too often in our past, but wars almost never produce peace and security and they surely do not advance the cause of freedom and liberty. Wars that are fought for pride, power, influence and resources tend to create the conditions conducive to the next war. The Mexican-American war led to the Civil War. World War I led to World War II. World War II led to the wars in Korea and Vietnam. Our Persian Gulf War and our military support of the Afghan Taliban gave us the terrorists of 9/11. Our ten-year war in Afghanistan has once again strengthened, not weakened, the Taliban.

It is time we applied the lessons of our past wars to our present and future. We don't have to remain creatures of war. Every powerful occupying army has always defined native resisters as terrorists. American settlers saw the American Indians as terrorists; American troops in the Philippines in 1899 saw the native Filipinos as terrorists; American soldiers in Vietnam saw the guerrilla troops and peasant farmers of Vietnam as terrorists. It is time to

recognize that war **is** a terrorist tactic. “War against terror” is a contradiction in terms. War will never end terrorism; it will only inspire more terrorists. In carrying the war to the homelands of “terrorists,” rather than making our land safe, we are now inspiring home-grown terrorists among our own citizens. **[# 37 Progress toward Racial Equality]**

Finally, I also believe there is a force more powerful than military force, and that is the power of nonviolence. The American Civil War did not win freedom for African Americans; only the nonviolent Civil Rights movement did that a century after the Civil War. **[# 38 Nelson Mandela]** In South Africa the brutal system of apartheid kept Black Africans in a state of semi-slavery, and in my youth the conventional wisdom was that violence was the only possible solution to that situation. Everyone assumed that South Africa was a powder keg waiting to explode. Yet, Nelson Mandela, a prisoner of the white South African government for 27 years, refused to take violent revenge on his persecutors and today whites and blacks in South Africa live in relative peace with equal rights of citizenship. **[# 39 Churchill & Gandhi]** Winston Churchill was a white racist who viewed Mahatma Gandhi with almost as much contempt as Hitler had for non-Aryans, yet Gandhi was determined to free India of the yoke of British rule without seeing Britain as the enemy of India. Gandhi prevailed and Britain gave up its crown jewel of India. With nonviolent resistance in World War II, Denmark resisted German rule more effectively, and saved far more Jews from the Holocaust, than did France with its more violent resistance movement against the Nazis. **[# 40 Lech Walesa, Fall of Berlin Wall, Gorbachev-Yeltsin]** The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the fall of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s came not through the force of arms but by the decisions of millions of courageous citizens who refused to continue cooperating with oppressive systems. It was

the over-extension of Soviet military power, not American arms, that brought about the end of the Soviet Union. **[# 41 Gandhi, Mandela, King]**

It is a costly myth, little more than a superstition, that some people are beyond hope and can only be moved by military force. Gandhi, King and Mandela have proven that nonviolence can work far more powerfully and permanently than military force in the modern world. Military force is good at humiliating people, good at killing innocent civilians en masse, and good at making enemies, but war is hopeless at making friends. It is time for us to realize human sacrifice does not make us safe. It didn't make the cave dwellers safe and it will not make us safe. Belief in human sacrifice is a dangerous superstition. War only multiplies insecurity, multiplies suffering, multiplies hatred, multiplies enemies. The more humans we sacrifice on the altar of war, the greater the ever-accelerating costs will be to ourselves and to the world.

Lieutenant Colonel Shannon Beebe, senior Africa analyst at the Pentagon, and Mary Kaldor, Director of the Center for the Study of Global Governance at the London School of Economics, have just written an important book that makes a fitting conclusion to this talk: *The Ultimate Weapon Is No Weapon: Human Security and the New Rules of War and Peace*.^{xiv}

Beebe and Kaldor are not pacifists, but they argue that in this era of instant communications and world-wide weapons proliferation, the only way to human security is not through military weapons of any kind, but through a truly universal approach to security in which an Afghan life and an Iraqi life are valued exactly as much as an American life, where security is sought for poor people as much as for rich people, where people at the grass roots are mobilized to help choose civilian leaders who are held accountable for creating conditions of fairness, stability

and accountability, and where no one superpower tries to dictate to others how they should organize themselves. “Twentieth-century militaries were developed to defeat the ground forces, air forces and naval forces of an enemy state. The threats of the twenty-first century more closely resemble forces of nature. The instruments of security developed in the Cold War are increasingly unsuited for managing this.”^{xv}

Given the monumental financial costs of our modern military industrial complex, given the moral, psychological and social costs of modern warfare, and given the demonstrated self-defeating ineffectiveness of modern weaponry to provide human security, it does not take a pacifist outlook to suggest we are long overdue for a serious course correction in our foreign, military and diplomatic policies. We need to change course for the sake of our own survival. Given American tradition of eloquent dissent from our many wars, and given the insights of recent critics of militaristic approaches to today’s complex world, from Andrew Bacevich to Tony Judt to Beebe and Kaldor, there is reason to hope that we might be ready to give up our faith in war that has cost so much blood and treasure, for so little gain, over so many centuries. It is the responsibility of all of us to speak out on these issues, to expose and renounce the belief in human sacrifice, and to urge a more rational, humane and comprehensive emphasis on the power of nonviolence and on the need for human security for all people everywhere.

ⁱ An excellent overview of the importance of war in America’s entire history is Fred Anderson and Andrew Cayton, *The Dominion of War: Empire and Liberty in North America, 1500-2000* (New York: Viking, 2005).

ⁱⁱ Wavell’s prophetic phrase became the title of David Fromkin’s prize-winning book, *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East, 1914-1922* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1989).

ⁱⁱⁱ Eric Markusen, “Genocide and Warfare,” in Charles B. Strozier and Michael Flynn, eds., *Genocide, War and Human Survival* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996), p. 80.

^{iv} Leo Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 46; quoted in Eric Marcusen, “Genocide and Warfare,” in Strozier and Flynn, eds., *Genocide, War, and Human Survival*, p. 77.

^v Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War: A History* (New York: Random House, 2010), p. 149.

^{vi} Tony Judt, "The World We Have Lost," in *Reappraisals: Reflections on the Forgotten Twentieth Century* (New York: Penguin, 2008), p. 7.

^{vii} New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2010.

^{viii} As Wim Klooster has reminded me in an email, these examples are also reminiscent of incidents occurring under Operation Himmler in 1939 and used by the Nazis to justify invading Poland.

^{ix} Linda J. Bilmes and Joseph E. Stiglitz, *The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008).

^x See <http://www.brusselstribunal.org/Refugees.htm>.

^{xi} Robert A. Pape, "Suicide Terrorism and Democracy: What We Have Learned Since 9/11," Cato Institute, Sept. 8, 2006 <http://www.cato.org/event.php?eventid=3063>

^{xii} Sebastian Junger, *War* (New York: Twelve, 2010), pp. 154-55. The classic anti-war novel, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, by the German World War I veteran, Erich Maria Remarque, makes this same point eloquently.

^{xiii} <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/058.html>

^{xiv} New York: Public Affairs, 2010.

^{xv} Beebe and Kaldor, *The Ultimate Weapon Is No Weapon*, p. 19.