



This is “War and Terrorism”, chapter 16 from the book [A Primer on Social Problems \(index.html\)](#) (v. 1.0).

This book is licensed under a [Creative Commons by-nc-sa 3.0](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/) license. See the license for more details, but that basically means you can share this book as long as you credit the author (but see below), don't make money from it, and do make it available to everyone else under the same terms.

This content was accessible as of December 29, 2012, and it was downloaded then by [Andy Schmitz](http://lardbucket.org) in an effort to preserve the availability of this book.

Normally, the author and publisher would be credited here. However, the publisher has asked for the customary Creative Commons attribution to the original publisher, authors, title, and book URI to be removed. Additionally, per the publisher's request, their name has been removed in some passages. More information is available on this project's [attribution page](http://2012books.lardbucket.org/attribution.html?utm_source=header).

For more information on the source of this book, or why it is available for free, please see [the project's home page](http://2012books.lardbucket.org/). You can browse or download additional books there.

Chapter 16

War and Terrorism

Social Problems in the News

“War Crimes Haunt Iraq Vet,” the headline said. In the early 2000s, John Milton, a pseudonym, joined the Army and was sent to Iraq. There he served as a medic but was also armed. At age 21, he and five other soldiers were driving one day back from a beer run when a small bomb hit their vehicles. One of the soldiers died instantly, but the others survived and shot the bomber. As the bomber was lying on the ground and needing medical attention, the soldiers began to punch and kick him. Instead of tending to the bomber’s injuries, Milton fatally shot him in the head.

In the years since his military service ended, Milton’s war crime has haunted him. He continues to have nightmares and cannot get rid of his guilt. He talked with a psychiatrist at a Veterans Administration hospital, but that did not help because the psychiatrist “didn’t understand what [he] was talking about.” Before he entered the Army, Milton said, he “used to love being around people, but no more.” He was thinking of moving from his home in New Jersey to a quieter, emptier state like Montana or Wyoming.

Milton also remembered being ordered to euthanize wounded but treatable Iraqi soldiers, yet another war crime. After he did so several times, he decided he could no longer in good conscience follow those orders. He recalled, “I can still see every one of their faces, individually, exactly what they looked like that day.”

Source: Bykofsky, 2012Bykofsky, S. (2012, February 10). War crimes haunt Iraq vet. *Philadelphia Daily News*. Retrieved from http://www.philly.com/philly/news/20120210_Stu_Bykofsky_War_crimes_haunt_Iraq_vet.html.

Great war novels like *The Red Badge of Courage* and *War and Peace* highlight the heroism and horror that both occur on the battlefield. This news story likewise reminds us that war, however heroic, is also horrible. Atrocities happen; soldiers are killed or wounded, physically and/or mentally; and civilians suffer and die. As Sydney H. Schanberg (2005, p. 1), Schanberg, S. H. (2005, May 10). Not a pretty picture. *The Village Voice*, p. 1. a former *New York Times* reporter who covered the US wars in Vietnam and Cambodia, has bluntly observed, “‘History,’ Hegel said, ‘is a slaughterhouse.’ And war is how the slaughter is carried out.”

For much of human history, people considered war a necessary evil that was often waged for noble reasons. World War II, for example, was what we now call “the good war,” fought to end Hitler’s attempt to conquer much of the world. Millions died on the battlefield, in cities bombed by planes, and in concentration camps before Hitler and his allies were finally defeated.

About two decades after World War II ended, the United States began fighting another war meant to save the world for democracy, but this war was very different from the one against Hitler. This war was fought in Vietnam, and however a noble effort World War II might have been, the Vietnam War was just as ignoble to its critics. It was a war, some said, not to save the world for democracy but to help extend America’s power where it did not belong. The war’s severest critics called it an act of genocide against Asians. If the World War II generation grew up with a patriotic love for their nation, the Vietnam War generation grew up with much more cynicism about their government and about the military.

Ironically, that generation’s concern about the military was shared by none other than President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who warned about the dangers of what he called the **military-industrial complex**¹—the friendly interplay of the military, the defense industry, and political leaders—in his farewell presidential address (Ledbetter, 2011). Ledbetter, J. (2011). *Unwarranted influence: Dwight D. Eisenhower and the military-industrial complex*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Eisenhower himself had been a member of the military-industrial complex, having served as a five-star general and supreme commander of the Allied forces in Europe during World War II before becoming president. His military experience made him no fan of warfare; as he once observed, “I hate war as only a soldier who has lived it can, only as one who has seen its brutality, its futility, its stupidity.” He also feared that the military-industrial complex was becoming too powerful and gaining “unwarranted influence” over American life as it acted for its own interests and not necessarily for those of the nation as a whole. He warned that the “potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist” (Eisenhower, 1960). Eisenhower, D. D. (1960). *Public papers of the presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office.

1. The close relationships among military leaders, government officials, and defense contractors.

Eisenhower's fears about the military-industrial complex reflected his more general concern about **militarism**², or an overemphasis on military policy and spending, which he thought was costing the nation far too much money. In a remarkable and now famous statement made early in his presidency, Eisenhower (1960, p. A1) Eisenhower, D. D. (1960). Farewell Speech. *New York Times*, A1. declared, "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the clouds of war, it is humanity hanging on a cross of iron."



President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned about what he called the "unwarranted influence" of the military-industrial complex.

Source: "Dwight D. Eisenhower,"
Wikimedia, Last modified on
December 13, 2011,
[http://commons.wikimedia.org/
wiki/File:Dwight_D._Eisenhower
- NARA - 531434.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dwight_D._Eisenhower_-_NARA_-_531434.jpg).

Eisenhower's concerns are even more valid today. As the United States and other governments spend hundreds of billions of dollars annually on their militaries, mass death and destruction from war beyond what Eisenhower could have ever imagined are a major concern, and serious social needs go unmet. It is probably trite to say that war profoundly affects societies, but that is precisely why war and the threat of war are considered perhaps the most pressing social problem of our times and a threat to the entire planet.

Terrorism also profoundly affects societies. Yet most Americans probably did not consider terrorism a social problem before September 11, 2001, when, as has often been said, the world changed. On that terrible day, terrorists drove two passenger jets into the World Trade Center in New York and another into the Pentagon; a fourth plane apparently headed for a Washington, DC, target crashed in central Pennsylvania when brave passengers fought back. The shock of the 3,000 deaths that resulted continues to haunt us even as we have become accustomed to homeland security measures in our airports and elsewhere that would have seemed inconceivable a generation ago.

Against this horrific backdrop of the modern era, this chapter examines war and terrorism as the final social problems discussed in this book. As forms of armed conflict that aim to defeat an opponent, war and terrorism have been part of the human experience for thousands of years. However, their manifestation in the contemporary era is particularly frightening, thanks to ever more powerful

2. An overemphasis on military policy and spending.

weapons, such as nuclear arms, that threaten human existence. We consider their causes, dynamics, and consequences before discussing certain actions and policies that might conceivably reduce these threats to peaceful societies and human existence.

16.1 Sociological Perspectives on War and Terrorism

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Summarize the key assumptions and emphases of the functionalist, conflict, and symbolic interactionist perspectives on war and terrorism.

The three major sociological perspectives offer some very different understandings of war and terrorism. You might agree with some of their assumptions and disagree with other assumptions, but together they capture the major dimensions of these two forms of armed conflict. [Table 16.1 "Theory Snapshot"](#) summarizes these assumptions.

Table 16.1 Theory Snapshot

Theoretical perspective	Major assumptions
Functionalism	War and terrorism serve several important functions. For example, they increase social solidarity as a society unites to defeat a perceived enemy. Some wars have also helped preserve freedom and democracy.
Conflict theory	War and militarism primarily advance the interests of the military-industrial complex and take billions of dollars from unmet social needs.
Symbolic interactionism	Symbols such as the flag play an important role in marshaling support for war. Definitions of several concepts also play an important role in public opinion regarding war and terrorism.

Functionalism

Recall that functionalism emphasizes the usefulness of certain behaviors and social institutions for many aspects of society. One of functionalism's most important insights is that social problems might actually be useful in this way, however many difficulties they might otherwise cause. To use an example from [Chapter 1 "Understanding Social Problems"](#), crime certainly causes many problems, but it also creates hundreds of thousands of jobs in law enforcement, courts and corrections, home security, and other sectors of the economy that deal with crime.

In this spirit, functionalism similarly emphasizes the ways in which war and terrorism are useful for society, however horrible they are in so many other ways. Perhaps the first sociologist to make this point for war was Robert E. Park, the 1925 president of the American Sociological Association (which was then called the American Sociological Society—a name that was later changed because of its acronym!). In January 1941, less than a year before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Park published an influential essay called “The Social Function of War: Observations and Notes,” in a leading sociology journal (Park, 1941). Park, R. E. (1941). The social function of war: Observations and notes. *American Journal of Sociology*, 46, 551–570.

Park’s essay outlined several functions of war. First, war *helps resolve international disputes* over matters such as territorial boundaries and religious and other ideologies. No matter what one might think of war, historically it has resolved disputes between nations, with the winner of the war winning the dispute. Even though very few people would say that war is a preferred method for resolving a dispute, it still has performed this function.

Second, war *generates a stronger sense of social bonding and solidarity* within the societies that are at war. Having a common enemy, people within a society at war “come together” with a shared purpose and feel more united and patriotic than before. This dynamic is called the *external conflict/internal cohesion* process (Markides & Cohn, 1982). Markides, K. C., & Cohn, S. F. (1982). External conflict/internal cohesion: A reevaluation of an old theory. *American Sociological Review*, 47, 88–98. Although Park did not discuss terrorism, this form of armed conflict can also create social solidarity. In the days and weeks after 9/11, Americans came together as one people, and the president of France famously said, “We are all Americans.”

Third, wars many centuries ago, such as those in which ancient Rome in essence formed and grew from conquering various tribes, *led to the development of the nation-state* as a political institution. As these tribes came under the rule of nation-states, their separate tribal identities weakened as they gradually identified themselves as one people belonging to their nation-state; Park (p. 569) referred to this process as “the coming-together and integration of races and peoples.” Moreover, the size and resources of these nation-states allowed them to generate scientific, cultural, and political advances that played an important role in world history. War, then, indirectly contributed to these advances. Although nation-states still might have eventually developed even without war, their development was accelerated by war.



War generates a sense of social cohesion among the people in a society that is at war.

© Thinkstock

Other functions of war can also be cited. Some wars, including the American colonists' war against England and the Allies' war against Hitler and Japan, have helped *maintain and establish freedom and democracy*. In the past and also today, war and military service have also *provided important opportunities for jobs and career advancement for people of color and women*. Related to this, the US military provides millions of jobs annually and is a ready form of employment for people who only have a high school education. More generally, the military and the defense industry are certainly important components of the US economy, and military spending in some eras *has helped stimulate the US economy*. In perhaps the most notable example of this effect, spending for World War II is commonly credited with helping to lift the United States out of the Great Depression (Shiller, 2012). Shiller, R. J. (2012, January 15). Spend, spend, spend. It's the American way. *New York Times*, BU3.

In a final function, weapons research and other types of military research *have contributed to scientific and technological development* in general. For example, military research played a key role in the early development of the Internet.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory's perspective on war and the military is decidedly more negative than that of functionalism. There are actually many different views within conflict theory about war and the military, but three related views stand out. The first view echoes President Eisenhower's concern over the power and influence of the military-industrial complex. According to conflict theory, the United States spends so much on the military and even goes to war because military officials, defense contractors, and political leaders work hand-in-hand in a rather cozy relationship. Although they may profess that their actions are meant to keep the nation safe, their ultimate goal is to enhance their political power and financial well-being.

The most famous critique of the military-industrial complex from a conflict theorist is undoubtedly that of sociologist C. Wright Mills in his book *The Power Elite* (1956). Mills, C. W. (1956). *The power elite*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. According to Mills, the **power elite**³ is composed of government, big business, and the military, which together constitute a *ruling class* that controls society and works for its own interests, not for the interests of the citizenry. Members of the power elite, Mills said, see each other socially and serve together on the boards of directors of corporations, charitable organizations, and other bodies. When cabinet members, senators, and top generals and other military officials retire, they often become corporate executives; military officials in particular join defense contractors. Conversely, corporate executives often become cabinet members and other key political appointees, and defense industry executives often end up in the Pentagon. This *circulation of the elites* creates a rather cozy relationship that helps ensure their dominance over American life and in particular ensures that the

3. C. Wright Mills's term for the government, big business, and the military, which he said collaborate to advance their own interests.

military-industrial complex has an untold influence over economic and foreign policy.

A more recent critique of the military-industrial complex and foreign policy by sociologist Mark C. Worrell (2011, p. 51) Worrell, M. P. (2011). *Why nations go to war: A sociology of military conflict*. New York, NY: Routledge. bluntly stresses the role played by the desire for corporate profits: “War is business and it is profitable...What we learned in the aftermath of World War II is that mass destruction is great for corporate profits...War is driven by corporate profits and corporations drive politics.” According to Worrell and other contemporary critics of what they call the *warfare state*, the United States now has a *permanent war economy*. In their view, the war on terrorism after 9/11 and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan “have only deepened the trend toward ever more concentrated state, corporate, and military power in a society that ostensibly embraces democratic values” (Boggs, 2011, p. ix). Boggs, C. (2011). *Empire versus democracy: The triumph of corporate and military power*. New York, NY: Routledge.

The second view of conflict theory concerns **imperialism**⁴, or the use of military power and other means to extend a nation’s influence and control over other nations. This view, held by the more radical proponents of conflict theory, argues that war and other military ventures by the United States are done for the sake of imperialism rather than for noble goals such as the preservation and extension of democracy. In this view, the United States wages war and engages in other military actions to gain access to oil and other resources of other societies, with the ultimate aim of enriching multinational corporations and other parties. The characterization does not hold true for World War II, conflict theorists concede, but they argue it holds true for many and perhaps most other US wars and military actions, historically and today. In their view, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in particular were fought under false pretenses to maintain adequate oil supply and more generally to extend America’s military and economic influence around the world (Worrell, 2011). Worrell, M. P. (2011). *Why nations go to war: A sociology of military conflict*. New York, NY: Routledge.

A third view of conflict theory criticizes the size of the military budget and emphasizes the billions of dollars it takes from social needs such as poverty and climate change. As sociologist Carl Boggs (2011, p. 17) Boggs, C. (2011). *Empire versus democracy: The triumph of corporate and military power*. New York, NY: Routledge. argues, “The war economy, for its part, devours roughly one trillion dollars in material, technological, and human resources yearly..., ensuring a pattern of waste, destruction, uneven development, eroded public infrastructures, and decimated social programs. Decaying American cities have become a supreme legacy of the warfare system.” We return to this issue later in this chapter.

4. The use of military power and other means to extend a nation’s influence and control over other nations.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionist writing on war features several emphases. One theme concerns the perceptions and experiences of people involved in war: soldiers, civilians, and others. There are many moving accounts, for example, both real and fictitious, of soldiers' life on the battlefield and after they come home from war.

A second emphasis concerns the use of symbols to marshal support for war or protest against war. Symbols such as the flag evoke feelings of patriotism, perhaps especially when a nation is at war. The president and other politicians typically display a flag when they give major speeches, and it would be unthinkable for a flag not to be showing when the speech is about war or the threat of war. During the Vietnam War, protesters sometimes flew the US flag upside-down (the international symbol of distress) to show their hatred of the war, and some protesters also burned the flag—an act that is almost guaranteed to provoke outrage and hostility from onlookers.

Figure 16.1 *International Peace Symbol*



Source: Clip art:
<http://www.homemade-preschool.com/image-files/peace-sign-black.png>.

Other symbols can also be important. When the United States invaded Iraq in March 2003, millions of Americans put magnetic yellow ribbons on their cars, SUVs, and pickup trucks to show their support for the troops. The largest manufacturer of the ribbons sold more than one million monthly a year after the war began. However, sales slipped as support for the war declined, and four years after the war numbered only 4,000 monthly (Ward, 2007). Ward, A. (2007, March 2). Yellow ribbons dwindle with war support. *The Financial Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/4793da48-c8f7-11db-9f7b-000b5df10621.html#axzz1uqyZTxHR>. Another ubiquitous symbol during the Vietnam War was the so-called international peace symbol (see [Figure 16.1 "International Peace Symbol"](#)), originally designed in the late 1950s to symbolize concern over nuclear weapons. Vietnam War protesters wore this symbol on their clothing, and many put peace symbol decals on their motor vehicles, book bags, and other possessions.

A third emphasis of symbolic interactionism concerns how concepts related to war and terrorism come to be defined in ways that advance the goals of various parties. For example, a key goal of the military in basic training is to convince trainees that people they may face on the battlefield are *the enemy* and, as such, an appropriate target for killing. Related to this goal is the need to convince trainees that when

they kill an enemy soldier, the killing is a justified killing and not murder. Similarly, the military often refers to civilian deaths or wounding as *collateral damage* in a conscious or unconscious attempt to minimize public horror at civilian casualties.

Another definitional issue concerns *terrorism*. As we shall discuss later, the definition of *terrorism* is very subjective, as actions that some people might regard as terrorism might be regarded by other people as freedom fighting or some other much more positive term than terrorism.

With this theoretical background in mind, we now turn to several issues and problems of war and terrorism.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- War and terrorism serve several functions, including the creation of social solidarity.
- According to conflict theory, war advances the interests of the military-industrial complex, while militarism takes money away from unmet social needs.
- Symbolic interactionism emphasizes the importance of symbols in support for war and terrorism and the experience of civilians and veterans as victims of war.

FOR YOUR REVIEW

1. Which one of the three perspectives on war and terrorism do you most favor? Why?
2. Why do you think the flag has so much symbolic importance in American society?

16.2 War

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Explain why war is best understood as a social phenomenon and why nations go to war.
2. Outline both sides to the debate over the size of the US military budget.
3. List the types of problems that military veterans often face.

War⁵ is “sustained armed conflict” that causes “large-scale loss of life or extreme material destruction” (Worrell, 2011, p. 1). Worrell, M. P. (2011). *Why nations go to war: A sociology of military conflict*. New York, NY: Routledge. Wars occur both between nations and within nations, when two or more factions engage in armed conflict. War between nations is called **international war**⁶, while war within nations is called **civil war**⁷.

The World at War

More than 100 million soldiers and civilians are estimated to have died during the international and civil wars of the twentieth century (Leitenberg, 2006). Leitenberg, M. (2006). *Deaths in wars and conflicts in the 20th century*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Peace Studies Program. Although this is almost an unimaginable number, there is cause for some hope, even as there is also cause for despair.

The hope arises from historical evidence that the number of international wars, civil wars, and other types of armed conflict has in fact declined over the centuries, with the number in the past half-century much smaller than in centuries past (Pinker, 2012). Pinker, S. (2012). *The better angels of our nature: Why violence has declined*. New York, NY: Penguin. Reflecting this decline, a smaller percentage of the world’s population died in armed conflict during the past century than in earlier eras.

5. Sustained armed conflict resulting in large-scale loss of life or extreme material destruction.

6. War between nations.

7. War within nations.

To illustrate this trend, compare two periods of history (Pinker, 2012). Pinker, S. (2012). *The better angels of our nature: Why violence has declined*. New York, NY: Penguin. The first is the thirteenth century, when the Mongol Empire under the initial leadership of Genghis Khan became an empire in Asia and Eastern Europe through wars and conquest in which it killed 40 million people. The second period is 1939–1945, when World War II killed 55 million people. Although 55 million is more than 40 million, the world’s population in the thirteenth century was only

one-seventh its population during the World War II period. A quick calculation shows that about 11 percent of the world's population died from the Mongolian wars, while 2 percent died from World War II. In terms of the risk of dying in war, then, the Mongolian wars were five times more deadly than World War II.

Looking further back in world history, the death rate in prehistoric times from tribal warfare was extremely high. If this high rate had held true during the twentieth century, 2 billion people would have died in twentieth-century wars rather than the 100 million who did die (Pinker, 2012).Pinker, S. (2012). *The better angels of our nature: Why violence has declined*. New York, NY: Penguin. Although wars, other armed conflicts, terrorism, and genocide certainly continue, and 100 million is a terribly high number of deaths, the world overall is in fact more peaceful now than in the past.



Although World War II killed an estimated 55 million people, a smaller percentage of the world's population died in armed conflict during the twentieth century than in earlier eras.

That is the good news and the cause for hope. The cause for despair is twofold. First, war, terrorism, genocide, and other armed conflicts *do* continue. Even if they are less frequent and less deadly than in the past, that is of little comfort to the tens of millions of people around the world during the past century who died or otherwise suffered in war and other armed conflict and who live in fear today of becoming a victim of armed conflict.

© Thinkstock

Second, the world today is a much more dangerous place than in the past because of the existence of nuclear weapons. The thirteenth-century Mongolians killed their 40 million with battleaxes and other crude weapons; the World War II deaths resulted from gunfire and conventional bombs. At the end of that war, however, the nuclear age began when the United States dropped two atomic weapons on Japan that killed tens of thousands instantly and tens of thousands more from radiation exposure.

Those two weapons were tiny in both number and size compared to nuclear weapons today. More than 20,000 nuclear warheads now exist; 4,800 are operational and almost 2,000 (held by the United States and Russia) are on high alert, ready to be used at any time (Federation of American Scientists, 2011).Federation of American Scientists. (2011). Status of world nuclear forces. Retrieved February 16, 2012, from <http://www.fas.org/programs/ssp/nukes/nuclearweapons/nukestatus.html>. Each of these warheads is an average of at least twenty times more powerful than each of the atomic bombs that decimated Japan. The Union of Concerned Scientists (2009)Union of Concerned Scientists. (2009). Nuclear weapons

overview. Retrieved February 16, 2012, from http://www.ucsusa.org/nuclear_weapons_and_global_security/nuclear_weapons/technical_issues/nuclear-weapons-overview.html. summarizes their danger bluntly: “Nuclear weapons remain the greatest and most immediate threat to human civilization.” However more peaceful the world is today, it could easily end at any moment.

The United States at War

If we say the history of the United States has been written in war, that is not too much of an exaggeration. The United States, of course, began with the colonial war against England. The American Civil War, also called the War Between the States, then tore it apart less than a century later. Between 1861 and 1865, at least 618,000 and perhaps as many as 750,000 soldiers in both the Union and the Confederacy died on the battlefield or from disease. The minimum estimate almost matches the number of American deaths in all the other wars the United States has fought, and the maximum estimate greatly exceeds this number (see [Table 16.2 "US Participation in Major Wars"](#)).

Table 16.2 US Participation in Major Wars

War	Number of troops	Troop deaths	Troops wounded
Revolutionary War	184,000–250,000	4,435	6,188
War of 1812	286,730	2,260	4,505
Mexican War	78,218	13,283	4,152
Civil War	3,867,500	618,222–750,000	412,175
Spanish-American War	306,760	2,446	1,662
World War I	4,734,991	116,516	204,002
World War II	16,112,566	405,399	671,846
Korean War	5,720,000	36,574	103,284
Vietnam War	8,744,000	58,209	153,303
Persian Gulf War	2,225,000	382	467
Iraq and Afghanistan Wars	2,333,972	6,251	47,566
Note: Deaths are from combat, disease, and other causes.			

Sources: Fischer, H. (2005). American war and military operations casualties: Lists and statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.history.navy.mil/library/online/>

american%20war%20casualty.htm; <http://web.archive.org/web/20070711050249/http://www.cwc.lsu.edu/other/stats/warcost.htm>; Hacker, J. D. (2011, September 20). *New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/09/20/recounting-the-dead>; US Department of Defense. (2012, May 18). Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Operation New Dawn (OND), and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) U.S. Casualty Status. Retrieved from <http://www.defense.gov/news/casualty.pdf> (accessed February 16, 2012); Martinez, L. (2011, November 11). US veterans: By the numbers. *ABC News*. Retrieved from <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/us-veterans-numbers/story?id=14928136#1>.

The United States has been at war in one-fifth of the years it has existed (Bumiller, 2010). Bumiller, E. (2010, July 25). The war: A trillion can be cheap. *New York Times*, p. WK3. Between the end of the colonial period and 1993, the US military was involved in at least 234 declared wars, undeclared wars, or other situations abroad involving actual or potential armed conflict (Collier, 1993). Collier, E. C. (1993). Instances of use of United States forces abroad, 1798–1993. Retrieved from <http://www.history.navy.mil/wars/foabroad.htm>. Since 1993, US armed forces have waged war in Iraq and in Afghanistan and also joined international military operations in such countries as Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Libya. By any measure, then, the US military has played a fundamental role, for better or worse, in the nation's foreign affairs historically and also today. Supporters of this role say the military has both protected and advanced the political and economic interests of the United States, while critics, as we have seen, charge that the military has been an instrument of imperialism.

Explaining War

The enormity of war has long stimulated scholarly interest in why humans wage war (Levy & Thompson, 2010). Levy, J. S., & Thompson, W. R. (2010). *Causes of war*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. A popular explanation for war derives from evolutionary biology. According to this argument, war is part of our genetic heritage because the humans who survived tens of thousands of years ago were those who were most able, by virtue of their temperament and physicality, to take needed resources from other humans they attacked and to defend themselves from attackers. In this manner, a genetic tendency for physical aggression and warfare developed and thus still exists today. In support of this evolutionary argument, some scientists note that chimpanzees and other primates also engage in group aggression against others of their species (Wrangham, 2004). Wrangham, R. W. (2004). Killer species. *Daedalus*, 133(4), 25–35.

However, other scientists dispute the evolutionary explanation for several reasons (Begley, 2009). Begley, S. (2009, June 29). Don't blame the caveman. *Newsweek*, 52–62.

First, the human brain is far more advanced than the brains of other primates, and genetic instincts that might drive these primates' behavior do not necessarily drive human behavior. Second, many societies studied by anthropologists have been very peaceful, suggesting that a tendency to warfare is more cultural than biological. Third, most people are not violent, and most soldiers have to be resocialized (in boot camp or its equivalent) to overcome their deep moral convictions against killing. If warlike tendencies were part of human genetic heritage, these convictions would not exist.



Scholars have attempted to explain why human beings wage war. A popular explanation comes from the field of evolutionary biology and claims that a tendency toward warfare is hardwired into our genetic heritage because it conferred certain evolutionary advantages.

Image courtesy of Sgt. Joshua Risner, US Army, [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:US_Army_51817_BAGHDAD - Iraqi Soldiers, with the 6th IA Division, familiarize themselves with their targets and prepare for a PKC machine gun range at Combat Outpost 402, here, Sept. 28. In addition to marksmanship.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:US_Army_51817_BAGHDAD_-_Iraqi_Soldiers,_with_the_6th_IA_Division,_familiarize_themselves_with_their_targets_and_prepare_for_a_PKC_machine_gun_range_at_Combat_Outpost_402,_here,_Sept._28._In_addition_to_marksmanship.jpg).

War as a Social Phenomenon

If warfare is not biological in origin, then it is best understood as a social phenomenon, one that has its roots in the decisions of political and military officials. Sometimes, as with the US entrance into World War II after Pearl Harbor, these decisions are sincere and based on a perceived necessity to defend a nation's people and resources, and sometimes these decisions are based on cynicism and

deceit (Solomon, 2006). Solomon, N. (2006). *War made easy: How presidents and pundits keep spinning us to death*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

A prime example of this latter dynamic is the Vietnam War. The 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, in which Congress authorized President Lyndon Johnson to wage an undeclared war in Vietnam, was passed after North Vietnamese torpedo boats allegedly attacked US ships. However, later investigation revealed that the attack never occurred and that the White House lied to Congress and the American people (Wells, 1994). Wells, T. (1994). *The war within: America's battle over Vietnam*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Four decades later, questions of deceit were again raised after the United States began the war against Iraq because of its alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction. These weapons were never found, and critics charged that the White House had fabricated and exaggerated evidence of the weapons in order to win public and congressional support for the war (Danner, 2006). Danner, M. (2006). *The secret way to war: The Downing Street memo and the Iraq War's buried history*. New York, NY: New York Review of Books.

Population Change and Environmental Change

Although war is a social phenomenon arising from decisions of political and military officials, other phenomena can make it more likely that these officials will decide to go to war. These more basic causes of war include population change and environmental change. As [Chapter 15 "Population and the Environment"](#) discussed, population growth may lead to armed conflict of various types, including war, because growing populations need more food, water, and other resources. History shows that when these resources become too scarce within a society, that society is more likely to go to war to wrest these resources from another society (Gleditsch & Theisen, 2010). Gleditsch, N. P., & Theisen, O. M. (2010). Resources, the environment, and conflict. In M. D. Cavelty & V. Mauer (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of security studies* (pp. 221–232). New York, NY: Routledge.

[Chapter 15 "Population and the Environment"](#) also discussed environmental change as a source of armed conflict, including war (Fisman & Miguel, 2010). Fisman, R., & Miguel, E. (2010). *Economic gangsters: Corruption, violence, and the poverty of nations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Recall that when weather disasters and other environmental changes cause drought and other problems, crops and other resources become scarcer. Historically, this scarcity has again motivated societies to go to war.

Ideology and Prejudice

Nations also go to war for ideological reasons: they have certain belief systems that lead them to hold prejudice and other hostile feelings toward nations with different belief systems. Religion is a very important ideology in this regard. Historically and also today, nations in the Middle East and elsewhere have gone to war or are otherwise in conflict because of religious differences. Although the causes of World War II are complex, Hitler's effort to conquer much of Europe stemmed at least partly from his belief that Aryans (Germans and other Europeans with blond hair and blue eyes) were a superior species and non-Aryans were an inferior species (Bess, 2008). Bess, M. (2008). *Choices under fire: Moral dimensions of World War II*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Civilians: The Casualties of War

Table 16.2 "US Participation in Major Wars" listed the hundreds of thousands of troop deaths in American wars. The nation rightly grieved these deaths when they occurred and built monuments, such as the Korean and Vietnam veterans memorials in Washington, DC, that list the names of the dead.

John Tirman, director of the Center for International Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, worries that Americans have neglected the civilian victims of war. He applauds the Korean and Vietnam memorials in Washington, but he laments that "neither mentions the people of those countries who perished in the conflicts" (Tirman, 2012, p. B01). Tirman, J. (2012, January 8). Do we care when civilians die in war? *The Washington Post*, p. B01. "When it comes to our wars overseas," he adds, "concern for the victims is limited to U.S. troops."

Tirman notes that approximately 6 million civilians and soldiers died in the Korean, Vietnam/Indochina, Iraq, and Afghanistan wars. Most of these victims were civilians, and most of these civilian deaths were the result of actions by the United States and its allies. These deaths stemmed from bombs and other weapons that went astray, from orders by military and political leaders to drop millions upon millions of bombs on civilian areas, and sometimes from atrocities committed by US personnel. In World War II, Tirman adds, the United States dropped two atomic bombs that killed tens of thousands of civilians, and it joined its allies in the *carpet bombing* of German and Japanese cities that also killed hundreds of thousands.

Tirman (2012) Tirman, J. (2012, January 8). Do we care when civilians die in war? *The Washington Post*, p. B01. acknowledges that the carpet bombing, atomic bombing, and other actions in World War II that killed hundreds of thousands of civilians may have had strategic purposes, and the morality of these actions remains hotly debated today. But he also notes that the Korean and Vietnam wars included many atrocities committed by American troops against civilians. To be blunt, American troops simply shot untold hundreds of Korean and Vietnamese civilians in cold blood.



The two atomic bombs dropped by the United States over Japan during World War II killed tens of thousands of civilians. Scholar John Tirman worries that Americans have generally ignored the civilian victims of US wars.

Tirman describes one Korean incident in which machine gun fire from US warplanes killed about one hundred civilian refugees who were resting on a road. The remaining several hundred refugees hid and were shot at for three days by US ground soldiers. Tirman (2012, p. 107) Tirman, J. (2012, January 8). Do we care when civilians die in war? *The Washington Post*, p. B01. writes, “Surviving Koreans from the onslaught described in detail the chaotic panic they experienced; having believed the Americans were protecting them, they then saw the U.S. troops fire indiscriminately at men, women, and children at the scene.” At the end of the three days, about four hundred civilians lay dead.

Source: “Victim of Atomic Bomb of Hiroshima,” Wikipedia, Last modified on October 10, 2011, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Victim_of_Atomic_Bomb_001.jpg.

In Vietnam, Tirman writes, American troops and planes routinely razed villages to the ground, killing villagers indiscriminately, and then evacuated any survivors. Once they were evacuated, their villages were designated “free fire zones,” and then often bombed indiscriminately once again, killing any villagers who managed to remain in these zones despite the evacuations. All these killings were outright slaughter.

In one example of what Tirman (2011, p. 153) Tirman, J. (2011). *The deaths of others: The fate of civilians in America’s wars*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. calls a typical massacre, US soldiers arrived at a village that had just been bombed and ordered surviving residents to gather at the center of the town. After they did so, US ground troops shot them and left a pile of dead bodies that included twenty-one children. As this brief discussion indicates, although the massacre of 347 Vietnamese at the hamlet of My Lai is undoubtedly the Vietnam massacre that is best known (and perhaps the only known) to the American public, massacres were far from rare and in fact were rather common.

A central part of US military strategy in Vietnam involved destroying rice fields and the rest of the countryside to make it difficult for the Vietcong forces to engage in guerrilla warfare. To do so, it routinely deployed chemical weapons such as Agent Orange (dioxin, a known carcinogen), napalm, and white phosphorous. Planes sprayed and bombed these chemicals. These actions did destroy the countryside, but they also destroyed humans. The [Note 16.13 "Children and Our Future"](#) box discusses this problem in greater detail.

Children and Our Future

“Napalm Sticks to Kids”

This book has emphasized that children are often the innocent victims of various social problems from the time they are born, with important consequences for their futures. There are also many innocent victims in wartime, but when children are victims, our hearts especially go out to them. The Vietnam War marked a time when many Americans became concerned about children’s suffering during wartime. A key focus of their concern was the use of napalm.

Napalm is a very flammable jellylike substance made out of gasoline, soap, and white phosphorous. Napalm bombs were used in World War II to set fire to cities, military bunkers, and other targets. When napalm ends up on human skin, it causes incredibly severe pain and burns down to the bone, with death often resulting. Because napalm is very sticky, it is almost impossible to wipe off or remove with water once it does end up on skin.

Bombs containing napalm made by Dow Chemical were routinely used by the US military and its South Vietnamese allies during the Vietnam War to defoliate the countryside and to attack various targets. Some 400,000 tons of napalm were used altogether. When a napalm bomb explodes, it ignites an enormous fireball that burns everything in its path. Inevitably, Vietnamese civilians were in the path of the fireballs generated by the US and South Vietnamese militaries. An unknown number of civilians were burned severely or, if they were lucky, died. Many antiwar protests in the United States focused on the civilian suffering from napalm. Protesters at Dow Chemical’s New York office carried signs that said, “Napalm Burns Babies, Dow Makes Money.”

One of these civilians was a 9-year-old girl named Phan Thi Kim Phuc. An Associated Press photo of her running naked and screaming with burns after her village was napalmed was one of the most memorable photos of that war. Although she survived, it took seventeen surgeries to turn her whole again.

A poem about napalm, reportedly written by members of the US First Air Cavalry, surfaced during the war. Some verses follow.

We shoot the sick, the young, the lame,

We do our best to kill and maim,

Because the kills all count the same,

Napalm sticks to kids.

Ox cart rolling down the road,

Peasants with a heavy load,

They're all V.C. when the bombs explode,

Napalm sticks to kids.

A baby sucking on his mother's t*t,

Children cowering in a pit,

Dow Chemical doesn't give a s!#t,

Napalm sticks to kids.

Blues out on a road recon,
See some children with their mom,
What the hell, let's drop the bomb,
Napalm sticks to kids.

Flying low across the trees,
Pilots doing what they please,
Dropping frags on refugees,
Napalm sticks to kids.

They're in good shape for the shape they're in,
But, God I wonder how they can win,
With Napalm running down their skin,
Napalm sticks to kids.

Drop some napalm on the barn,
It won't do too much harm,
Just burn off a leg or arm,
Napalm sticks to kids.

Sources: Ledbetter, 2011; Vietnam Veterans Against the War, 1971; Ledbetter, J. (2011). *Unwarranted influence: Dwight D. Eisenhower and the military-industrial complex*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press; Vietnam Veterans Against the War. (1971). A.I.D.E. napalm sticks to kids. Retrieved February 20, 2012, from <http://www.vvaw.org/veteran/article/?id=823>.

Veterans: The Casualties of War

The attention just given to civilians should in no way obscure or minimize the fact that veterans are also casualties of war. The Korean and Vietnam veterans' memorials in the nation's capital and so many other memorials across the nation remind us of the hundreds of thousands of brave men and women who have died serving their country. But veterans are casualties in other ways, as the news story that began this chapter made clear. They suffer terrible physical and mental wounds that can maim them for life (Dao, 2012). Dao, J. (2012, January 2). Acting out war's inner wounds. *New York Times*, p. A1.

Veterans of the Vietnam War came back to a nation that often did not greet them as heroes. Many came back addicted to heroin and other drugs, many were unemployed, and many became homeless. Many veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have also come back home with these problems. Their unemployment rate was 13.1 percent in December 2011, compared to only 8.5 percent for the general public; the unemployment rate for veterans ages 20–24 was near 30 percent (Dewan, 2011; Zornick, 2012). Dewan, S. (2011, December 18). As wars end, young veterans return to scant jobs. *New York Times*, p. A1; Zornick, G. (2012, January 6). Job numbers are up, but veterans are left behind. *The Nation*. Retrieved from

<http://www.thenation.com/blog/165487/job-numbers-are-veterans-are-left-behind>. Many veterans are experiencing posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), marked by nightmares, panic attacks, and other symptoms (Dao, 2012). Dao, J. (2012, January 2). Acting out war's inner wounds. *New York Times*, p. A1. Veterans with PTSD often end up with problems in their marriages or other relationships and are more likely to commit violence against their spouses or partners. When these problems occur, they may ironically worsen the psychological state of these veterans.

A related problem is suicide. For every 100,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who receive health care from the Veterans Administration, 38 have killed themselves. The suicide rate of the general population is only 11.3 deaths per 100,000 population. The suicide rate of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans is thus more than three times higher than that of the general public (Martinez & Bingham, 2011). Martinez, L., & Bingham, A. (2011, November 11). US veterans: By the numbers. *ABC News*. Retrieved from <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/us-veterans-numbers/story?id=14928136#14928131>.

Evidence from a national survey of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans underscores the problems they face (Pew Research Center, 2011). Pew Research Center. (2011). *War and sacrifice in the post-9/11 era*. Washington, DC: Author. Almost half said their family relations were strained and that they often felt irritable or angry; 44 percent said they had problems reentering civilian life; and 37 percent said they had suffered from PTSD.



Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan War have a higher suicide rate than that of the general public.

One Iraq veteran with these problems is Tom Marcum, who came home with a brain injury, PTSD, and fits of violence and short-term memory loss. His wife April had to quit her teaching job to take care of him, and their life savings slowly dwindled. April missed the man she used to know: “The biggest loss is the loss of the man I married. His body’s here, but his mind is not here anymore. I see glimpses of him, but he’s not who he was” (Einhorn, 2011, p. A12). Einhorn, C. (2011, September 28). Looking after the soldier, back home and damaged. *New York Times*, p. A12.

© Thinkstock

As the Marcums’ situation indicates, spouses and other family members of veterans also are casualties of war. Indeed, the Marcums’ situation is far from rare among the families of the 2 million veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. As a news report summarized these families’ experience, “Ms. Marcum has joined a growing

community of spouses, parents and partners who, confronted with damaged loved ones returning from war who can no longer do for themselves, drop most everything in their own lives to care for them. Jobs, hobbies, friends, even parental obligations to young children fall by the wayside. Families go through savings and older parents dip into retirement funds” (Einhorn, 2011, p. A12).Einhorn, C. (2011, September 28). Looking after the soldier, back home and damaged. *New York Times*, p. A12.

Families of deployed troops also face many difficulties. There is the natural fear that loved ones will never return from their overseas involvement in armed conflict. This fear can take a psychological toll on all members of these families, but perhaps especially on children. One teenager recalled the tensions that arose when his father was in Iraq: “I was in eighth grade when my dad deployed to Iraq. A kid walked up to me and said, ‘Your dad’s a baby killer.’ I didn’t handle that well. We both wound up suspended for that one” (Ashton, 2011).Ashton, A. (2011, July 22). Children of deployed troops struggle, study finds. *Bangor Daily News*. Retrieved from <http://bangordailynews.com/2011/07/22/health/children-of-deployed-troops-struggle-researchers-find>.

A recent study found that adolescents with a deployed parent are more likely than those with civilian parents to feel depressed and suicidal. They are also more likely to engage in drug use and binge drinking. Reflecting on these findings, an author of the study said, “It’s really time to focus on the children that are left behind” (Ashton, 2011).Ashton, A. (2011, July 22). Children of deployed troops struggle, study finds. *Bangor Daily News*. Retrieved from <http://bangordailynews.com/2011/07/22/health/children-of-deployed-troops-struggle-researchers-find>.

Rape and Sexual Assault

Women veterans face a special problem that most male veterans do not have to fear. That problem is rape, as at least one-fifth and perhaps as many as 84 percent of all military service are raped or sexually assaulted (including sexual harassment) by other military personnel (Turchik & Wilson, 2010).Turchik, J. A., & Wilson, S. M. (2010). Sexual assault in the US military: A review of the literature and recommendations for the future. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 15*, 267–277. In 2010, more than 19,000 US military personnel, most of them women, were raped or sexually assaulted (Stalsburg, 2011).Stalsburg, B. L. (2011). Rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment in the military: The quick facts. Retrieved February 18, 2012, from <http://servicewomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Rape-Sexual-Assault-and-Sexual-Harassment-in-the-Military.pdf>. Only about one-seventh of these victims reported their rapes and sexual assaults. Of these reported cases, only one-fifth went to trial, and only half of these defendants were convicted. As these

numbers make clear, military personnel who commit rape and sexual assault almost always avoid any punishment.

Applying Social Research

Determining the Prevalence of Rape and Sexual Assault in the Military

As the text discusses, most military women who are raped or sexually assaulted do not report these crimes to military authorities. As a result, reported rapes and sexual assaults compose only a very small percentage of all military rapes and sexual assaults. To get a more accurate estimate of how many such crimes occur, sound social research is necessary.

Despite this need, research on sexual assault in the military was scant before the early 2000s. This type of research accelerated, however, after several scandals involving sexual assault and harassment occurred during the 1990s on military bases and at military academies. The primary mode of research involved survey questionnaires given anonymously to samples, many of them random, of military members. The samples are almost entirely of women, given their higher risk of being sexually assaulted.

In these surveys, between 10 percent and 33 percent of women report being raped (including attempts) while they were serving in the military. When sexual assaults and sexual harassment are added to the crimes mentioned to respondents, between 22 percent and 84 percent of women report being raped, sexually assaulted, and/or sexually harassed while serving. Very few studies include men in their surveys, but one study reported a 3 percent rate of sexual assault victimization for men while they were in the military.

One major problem in this research literature is that different studies use different definitions and measures of sexual assault. Regardless of these problems, this growing body of research documents how often rape and sexual assault in the military occur. It also documents the psychological and health effects of military sexual assault (MSA). These effects are similar to those for civilians, and include anxiety, depression, PTSD, poorer physical health, and poorer job performance (in this case, their military duties).

In shedding light on the prevalence of military rape and sexual assault and on the many negative effects of these crimes, social science research has performed an important service. Future research will no doubt build on existing studies to further illuminate this significant problem.

Source: Turchik & Wilson, 2010
Turchik, J. A., & Wilson, S. M. (2010). Sexual assault in the US military: A review of the literature and recommendations for the future. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 15*, 267–277.

Women veterans who are raped or sexually assaulted often suffer PTSD. In fact, rape and sexual assault are the leading cause of PTSD among women veterans, while combat trauma is the leading cause of PTSD among male veterans. Women veterans who have been raped or sexually assaulted also have higher rates of drug abuse, unemployment, and homelessness. One veteran recalled being gang raped by her drill sergeant and four other soldiers, who then broke several bones in her body and urinated on her. Several years later, she was still having many health problems and could not forget what happened to her. She also refused to display the American flag, saying, “When I looked at the American flag, I used to see red, white, and blue. Now, all I see is blood” (Herdy & Moffeit, 2004, p. 4). Herdy, A., & Moffeit, M. (2004). *Betrayal in the Ranks*. Retrieved from <http://www.denverpost.com/Stories/0,0,36%257E30137%257E,00.html>.

In addition to psychological and physiological trauma, rape and sexual assault impose huge economic costs on the military because of medical expenses for helping survivors and for prosecuting their rapists. Health care expenses for survivors amount to almost \$1 billion annually, and the cost of prosecution amounts to \$19 million annually (Stalsburg, 2011). Stalsburg, B. L. (2011). Rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment in the military: The quick facts. Retrieved February 18, 2012, from <http://servicewomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Rape-Sexual-Assault-and-Sexual-Harassment-in-the-Military.pdf>.

Women veterans say that when they do report rape and sexual assault, military officials typically either blame them for what happened, ignore the crime altogether, or give the offender a very mild punishment such as not being allowed to leave a military base for a short period. When one woman who was raped by two soldiers in Iraq told her commander, he threatened her with a charge of adultery because she was married (Speier, 2012). Speier, J. (2012, February 8). Victims of military rape deserve justice. CNN.com. Retrieved <http://www.cnn.com/>.

Helping American Veterans

After World War II, the GI Bill helped millions of veterans to go to college and otherwise readjust to civilian life. But many observers say that the United States has neglected the veterans of later wars. Although education benefits and many

other services for veterans exist, the nation needs to do much more to help veterans, these observers say (Baker, 2012; Shusman, 2012). Baker, L. (2012, February 18). A concerted effort needed to help homeless veterans. *The Times-Leader*. Retrieved from http://www.timesleader.com/stories/A-concerted-effort-needed-to-help-homeless-veterans-COMMENTARY-STATE-SEN-LISA-BAKER,89325?search_filter=A+concerted+effort+needed+to+help+homeless+veterans&town_id=1&sub_type=stories; Shusman, B. (2012, February 18). Public, private organizations work to help thousands of homeless veterans in NY. *Voice of America News*. Retrieved from <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/usa/Public-Private-Organizations-Work-to-Help-Thousands-of-Homeless-Veterans-in-NY-139520143.html>.

The high unemployment rate of the Iraq and Afghanistan veterans has made this need even more urgent. As one business writer put it, “Collectively, it is our patriotic responsibility to help our nation’s servicemen and women thrive in today’s economy” (Gerber, 2012). Gerber, S. (2012, February 7). Why we should help veterans start their own businesses. *Time*. Retrieved from <http://business.time.com/2012/02/07/why-we-should-help-veterans-start-their-own-businesses/>. Advocates for veterans with severe physical or cognitive problems also urge the government to greatly expand its very small program of monthly cash payments to these veterans’ families to help replace their lost incomes (Einhorn, 2011). Einhorn, C. (2011, September 28). Looking after the soldier, back home and damaged. *New York Times*, p. A12.

As this brief discussion suggests, US veterans have many unmet needs. Our nation’s failure to meet their needs is shameful.

Other Impacts of War

When we think of the impact of war, the consequences for civilians and veterans as just discussed come most readily to mind. But not all civilians are affected equally. One of the many sad truisms of war is that its impact on a society is greatest when the war takes place within the society’s boundaries. For example, the Iraq war that began in 2003 involved two countries more than any others, the United States and Iraq. Because it took place in Iraq, many more Iraqis than Americans died or were wounded, and the war certainly affected Iraqi society—its infrastructure, economy, natural resources, and so forth—far more than it affected American society. Most Americans continued to live their normal lives, whereas most Iraqis had to struggle to survive the many ravages of war.

War also has impact beyond the consequences for civilians and veterans. As historians and political scientists have often described, wars have a significant

economic and political impact. Many examples of this impact exist, but one well-known example involves the defeat of Germany in World War I, which led to a worsening economy during the next decade that in turn helped fuel the rise of Hitler.

War can also change a nation's political structure in obvious ways, as when the winning nation forces a new political system and leadership on the losing nation. Other political and economic changes brought by war are less obvious. World War I again provides an interesting example of such changes. Before the war, violent labor strikes were common in Britain and other European nations. When the war began, a sort of truce developed between management and labor, as workers wanted to appear patriotic by supporting the war effort and hoped that they would win important labor rights for doing so. Although the truce later dissolved and labor-management conflict resumed, labor eventually won some limited rights thanks partly to its support for the war. As a historian summarized this connection, "By the end of the war, labor's wartime mobilization and participation had increased its relative power within European societies. As a result, and despite the fact that endeavors to reward labor for its wartime cooperation were, in general, provisional, partial, and half-hearted, it was nonetheless the case that labor achieved some real gains" (Halperin, 2004, p. 155). Halperin, S. (2004). *War and social change in modern Europe: The great transformation revisited*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

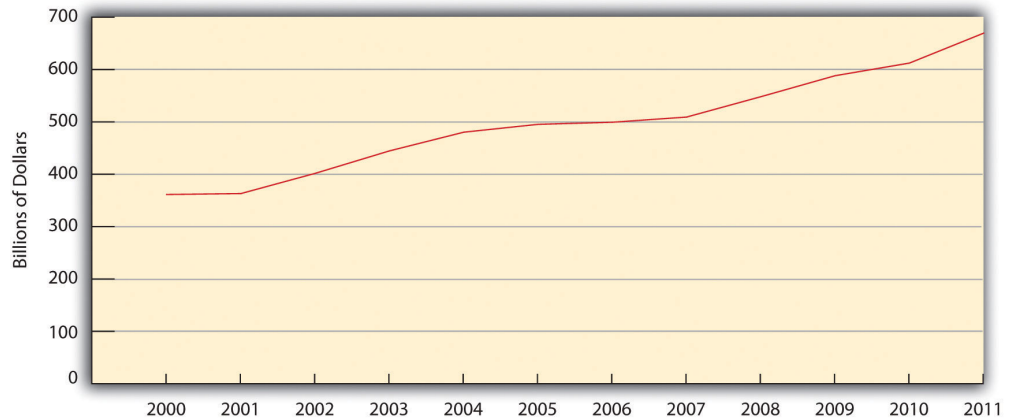
Other types of less obvious social changes have also resulted from various wars. For example, the deaths of so many soldiers during the American Civil War left many wives and mothers without their family's major breadwinner. Their poverty forced many of these women to turn to prostitution to earn an income, resulting in a rise in prostitution after the war (Rafter, 1990). Rafter, N. H. (1990). *Partial justice: Women, prisons, and social control*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction. Some eighty years later, the involvement of African Americans in the US armed forces during World War II helped begin the racial desegregation of the military. This change is widely credited with helping spur the hopes of southern African Americans that racial desegregation would someday occur in their hometowns (McKeeby, 2008). McKeeby, D. (2008, February 25). End of US military segregation set stage for rights movement. *America.gov*. Retrieved from <http://www.america.gov/st/diversity-english/2008/February/20080225120859liameruoy0.9820215.html>.

Militarism and the US Military Budget

As discussed earlier, President Eisenhower eloquently warned about the influence of the US military and the size of the military budget. The defense industry remains a powerful force in the US economy six decades after Eisenhower issued his warning, and US military spending continues unabated. In 2011, military spending

(defense outlays by the Department of Defense and certain other agencies; outlays include costs for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars) according to the government was approximately \$768 billion. Defense outlays rose by 85 percent beyond inflation between 2000 and 2011 (see [Figure 16.2 "US Defense Outlays, 2000–2011 \(Fiscal Year 2005 Dollars\)"](#)).

Figure 16.2 US Defense Outlays, 2000–2011 (Fiscal Year 2005 Dollars)



Source: US Census Bureau. (2012). *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2012*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab>.

Clarifying the Military Budget

As large as it is, the \$768 billion just cited as the “official” figure for the US military budget is misleading in at least two ways. First, it excludes several military-related costs such as veterans’ benefits and interest on the national debt from past military spending. When these costs are taken into account, the *total* 2011 military budget ranged between an estimated \$1.2 trillion and \$1.4 trillion (Friends Committee on National Legislation, 2012; War Resisters League, 2012). Friends Committee on National Legislation. (2012). Where do our income tax dollars go. Retrieved from <http://fcnl.org/assets/flyer/taxchart11.pdf>; War Resisters League. (2012). Where your income tax money really goes. Retrieved from <https://www.warresisters.org/sites/default/files/FY2012piechart-color.pdf>.

Second, the government states that defense outlays accounted for almost 20 percent of federal spending in 2011 (US Census Bureau, 2012). US Census Bureau. (2012). *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2012*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab>. However, the calculation for this statement excludes the additional military expenses just discussed, and it uses a misleading measure of federal spending. This latter fact needs some explanation. Federal spending includes both mandatory and discretionary spending. As its name implies, *mandatory spending* is required by various laws and includes such things as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, and interest payments on the national debt. Much of these mandatory expenses are funded by trust funds, such as Social Security taxes, which are raised and spent separately from income taxes. *Discretionary spending* involves the money the president and Congress must decide how to spend each year and includes federal income tax dollars only. Critics of the military budget argue that it is more accurate to cite its share of *discretionary* spending rather than its share of all federal spending (i.e., mandatory plus discretionary).



Critics say that US military spending is too high and takes needed dollars from domestic essentials like schooling and health care.

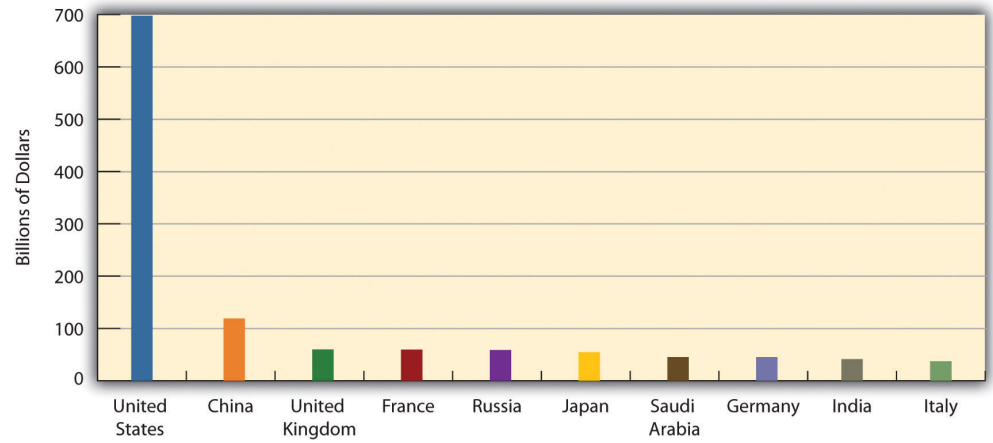
© Thinkstock

Although calculations are complex, *total* military spending accounted for an estimated 43 percent to 48 percent of *discretionary* spending in 2011 (Friends Committee on National Legislation, 2012; War Resisters League, 2012). Friends Committee on National Legislation. (2012). Where do our income tax dollars go? Retrieved from <http://fcnl.org/assets/flyer/taxchart11.pdf>; War Resisters League. (2012). Where your income tax money really goes. Retrieved from <https://www.warresisters.org/sites/default/files/FY2012piechart-color.pdf>. To put that another way, between 43 percent and 48 percent of all federal income tax dollars were used for military expenditures that year. This percentage range is much higher than the 20 percent share of federal spending cited by the government solely for defense outlays.

The US Military Budget in International Perspective

However it is calculated, the US military budget is by far the highest in the world and in fact accounts for 43 percent of the world's military spending. In 2010, the US official military budget (defense outlays only) was \$698 billion. China ranked a distant second at \$119 billion, followed by the United Kingdom at \$60 billion and France at \$49 billion (see [Figure 16.3 "International Military Spending, 2010"](#)).

Figure 16.3 *International Military Spending, 2010*



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (2011). *Background paper on SIPRI military expenditure data, 2010*. Retrieved from <http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/factsheet2010>.

Lessons from Other Societies

Guns or Butter?

“Guns versus butter” is a macroeconomics phrase that illustrates the dilemma that nations face in deciding their spending priorities. The more they spend on their military (guns), the less they can spend on food for their poor and other domestic needs (butter).

In making this very important decision, Europe has chosen butter over guns. The wealthy European countries that compose the bulk of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), an international consortium, spend 2.5 percent of their total economy (gross domestic product, or GDP) on their militaries. In contrast, the United States spends 5.1 percent of its economy on its base military budget, which does not include costs for veterans' benefits, for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and military spending that falls outside the Pentagon's budget.

The European nations' decisions to limit their military spending allows more spending for social needs. As a result, observes one economics writer, most Europeans have “universal health care, deeply subsidized education (including free university tuition in many countries), modern infrastructure, good mass transit, and far less poverty” than the United States has. Perhaps worse, the United States ranks last among the world's twenty wealthiest democracies in life expectancy and infant mortality and also ranks worst in the risk of dying before age 60. In addition, half of American children need food stamps at some time before becoming adults, while this problem is far rarer in Europe.

Compared to Europe, then, the United States has chosen guns over butter, leaving far less money for its social needs. As an economics writer wryly noted, “So remember to take pride in American power, and remember that it comes at a very high price.” In making this classic macroeconomics decision, the United States has much to learn from the wealthy nations of Europe.

Source: Holland, 2011Holland, J. (2011, June 17). Are we giant suckers? While the US blows money on the military, Europe spends dough on social programs. *AlterNet*. Retrieved from <http://www.alternet.org/world/151337/>

are we giant suckers while the us blows money on the military, europe spends dough on social programs.

US Arms Exports

Another dimension of militarism involves arms exports by both the US government and US military contractors. Combining data on both types of exports, the United States sent \$12.2 billion in arms deliveries to other nations in 2010. This figure ranked the highest in the world and constituted almost 35 percent of all world arms exports. Russia ranked second with \$5.3 billion in arms deliveries, while Germany ranked third with \$2.6 billion (Grimmett, 2011). Grimmett, R. E. (2011). *Conventional arms transfers to developing nations, 2003–2010*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service. Most arms exports from the United States and other exporters go to developing nations. Critics say these exports help fuel the worldwide arms race and international discord. They add that the exports often go to nations ruled by dictators, who then use them to threaten their own people (Feinstein, 2011; Shah, 2011). Feinstein, A. (2011). *The shadow world: Inside the global arms trade*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux; Shah, A. (2011). Arms trade: A major cause of suffering. Retrieved February 17, 2012, from <http://www.globalissues.org/issue/73/arms-trade-a-major-cause-of-suffering>.

“A Theft from Those Who Hunger and Are Not Fed”

Oscar Arias, a former president of Costa Rica and a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, echoed these famous words from President Eisenhower when he wrote a decade ago that US military spending took money away from important domestic needs. “Americans are hurt,” he warned, “when the defense budget squanders money that could be used to repair schools or to guarantee universal health care” (Arias, 1999, p. A19). Arias, O. (1999). Stopping America’s most lethal export. *New York Times*, June 23, p. A19.

Since Arias wrote these words, the United States has spent more than \$5.5 trillion on defense outlays in constant dollars (see [Figure 16.3 "International Military Spending, 2010"](#)), including \$1.3 trillion on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Cost equivalencies illustrate what is lost when so much money is spent on the military, especially on weapons systems that do not work and are not needed.



For example, the F-35 fighter aircraft has been plagued with “management problems, huge cost-overruns, [and] substantial performance shortfalls,” according to a recent news report (Kaplan, 2012). Kaplan, F. (2012, February 13). What happened to a leaner, meaner military. *Slate*. Retrieved from [http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/war_stories/2012/](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/war_stories/2012/02/2013_pentagon_budget_why_so_much_spending_on_big_war_weapons.html)

The \$300 million cost of each F-35 fighter aircraft could pay for the salaries of 10,000 new teachers.

Source: “First F-35C Flight,” Wikipedia, Last modified on November 20, 2011, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:First_F-35C_Flight.ogg.

[02/ 2013 pentagon budget why so much spending on big war weapons .html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/war_stories/2012/02/2013_pentagon_budget_why_so_much_spending_on_big_war_weapons.html). Each F-35 costs about \$300 million. This same sum could be used to pay the salaries of 10,000 new teachers earning \$30,000 per year or to build twenty elementary schools at a cost of \$15 million each. In another example, the Navy is designing a new series of nuclear submarines, with construction planned to start in 2019. The Navy plans to purchase twelve of these submarines. Each submarine is projected to cost more than \$8 billion to build and another \$21 billion in constant dollars in operation and maintenance costs over its lifetime (Castelli, 2012). Castelli, C. J. (2012, February 17). DOD: New nuclear subs will cost \$347 billion to acquire, operate. *InsideDefense.com NewsStand*. Retrieved from <http://defensenewsstand.com/NewsStand-General/The-INSIDER-Free-Article/dod-new-nuclear-subs-will-cost-347-billion-to-acquire-operate/menu-id-720.html>. This \$29 billion sum for each submarine during its lifetime could provide 5.8 million scholarships worth \$5,000 each to low- and middle-income high school students to help them pay for college.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan provide additional examples of “a theft from those who hunger and are not fed.” These wars cost the United States about \$1.3 trillion through 2012, for an average of more than \$100 billion annually (Harrison, 2012). Harrison, T. (2012). *Analysis of the FY2012 defense budget*. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. This same yearly amount could have paid for one year’s worth (California cost figures) of **all** of the following (National Priorities Project, 2012): National Priorities Project. (2012). Trade-offs. Retrieved February 16, 2012, from <http://costofwar.com/en/tradeoffs/state/CA/program/11/tradeoff/0>.

- 146,000 police officers
- 9.5 million children receiving low-income health care (Medicaid)
- 1.7 million students receiving full-tuition scholarships at state universities
- 1.6 million Head Start slots for children

- 179,000 elementary school teachers
- 162,000 firefighters
- 2.5 million Pell Grants of \$5,550 each

All these figures demonstrate that war and preparation for war indeed have a heavy human cost, not only in the numbers of dead and wounded, but also in the diversion of funds from important social functions and needs.

The Debate over the Size of the Military Budget

This diversion of funds is unfortunate, but it might still be necessary if the high level of US military spending is needed to ensure the nation's security. Experts disagree over this issue. Some think the United States needs to maintain and in fact increase its level of military spending, even with the Cold War long ended, to replace aging weapons systems, to meet the threat posed by terrorists and by "rogue" nations such as Iran, and to respond to various other trouble spots around the world. Military spending is good for workers, they add, because it creates jobs, and it also contributes to technological development (Boot, 2012; England, 2012; McKeon, 2012). Boot, M. (2012). Slashing America's defense: A suicidal trajectory. Retrieved February 20, 2012, from <http://www.cfr.org/defense-policy-and-budget/slashing-americas-defense-suicidal-trajectory/p26989>; England, G. (2012, February 5). Military preparedness does not come cheap. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/military-preparedness-does-not-come-cheap/2012/02/05/gIQA5PLfsQ_story.html; McKeon, H. P. B. (2012, January 12). Obama's damaging blow to our military. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/obamas-damaging-blow-to-our-military/2012/01/12/gIQA3eMhuP_story.html.

Other experts echo President Eisenhower's concern over the size of the military budget (Bacevich, 2011; Korb, Rothman, & Hoffman, 2012; Lochhead, 2012; Wheeler, 2009). Bacevich, A. (2011). *Washington rules: America's path to permanent war*. New York, NY: Metropolitan Books; Korb, L. J., Rothman, A., & Hoffman, M. (2012). *The fiscal year 2013 defense budget: A report card*. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress; Lochhead, C. (2012, February 14). Obama's defense cuts are a drop in the bucket. *San Francisco Chronicle*, p. A6; Wheeler, W. T. (2009). *America's defense meltdown: Pentagon reform for President Obama and the new Congress*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Noting that the military budget today exceeds the average budget during the Cold War, they think military spending is far higher than it needs to be to ensure the nation's defense with the Soviet Union no longer a threat. They say the United States could safely decrease its nuclear and conventional weapons arsenals without at all endangering national security. They also say that the stationing of some 300,000 American troops on 865 military bases abroad at the time of this writing, including 81,000 troops in Europe and 220,000 in

other nations, is hardly needed to ensure the nation's defense. As one scholar said of the military bases, "It makes as much sense for the Pentagon to hold onto 227 military bases in Germany as it would for the post office to maintain a fleet of horses and buggies" (vanden Heuvel, 2011). vanden Heuvel, K. (2011, June 13). Around the globe, US military bases generate resentment, not security. *The Nation*. Retrieved from <http://www.thenation.com/blog/161378/around-globe-us-military-bases-generate-resentment-not-security>.

These experts say the military budget is bloated for at least four reasons. First, the defense industry is very effective at lobbying Congress for increased military spending, with the cozy relationship among members of the military-industrial complex helping to ensure the effectiveness of this lobbying. Second, members of Congress fear being labeled "weak on defense" if they try to reduce the military budget or do not agree to new weapons systems requested by the Pentagon. Regarding this fear, former US senator and presidential candidate George McGovern (2011, p. 47), McGovern, G. (2011). *What it means to be a democrat*. New York, NY: Penguin. a decorated World War II hero, writes, "We need to end the false choice between a bloated budget and a weak spine."

Third, and helping to explain the success of this lobbying, military spending provides jobs and income to the home districts of members of Congress. Fourth, *military waste* in the form of cost overruns from poor accounting and other management failures is rampant. As just one example of such waste, a 2011 federal audit found that cost overruns over the prior two years had added at least \$70 billion to projected costs of various weapons systems (Drew, 2011). Drew, C. (2011, March 30). Audit of Pentagon spending finds \$70 billion in waste. *New York Times*, p. B4. A major reason for this problem was that the Pentagon had begun building these systems before their designs had been completely tested.

Critics also argue that military spending actually produces fewer jobs than spending in other sectors (Ledbetter, 2011). Ledbetter, J. (2011). *Unwarranted Influence: Dwight D. Eisenhower and the military-industrial complex*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. According to a recent estimate, \$1 billion spent by the Pentagon creates 11,200 jobs, but the same \$1 billion spent in other sectors would create 16,800 clean energy jobs, 17,200 health-care jobs, and 26,700 education jobs (Pollin & Garrett-Peltier, 2011). Pollin, R., & Garrett-Peltier, H. (2011). *The US employment effects of military and domestic spending priorities: 2011 update*. Amherst, MA: Political Economy Research Institutes. To quote the title of a recent report, military spending is "a poor job creator" (Hartung, 2012). Hartung, W. D. (2012). *Military spending: A poor job creator*. Washington, DC: Center for International Policy. This report concluded that "the more money we spend on unneeded weapons programs, the more layoffs there will be of police officers, firefighters, teachers, and other workers whose jobs are funded directly or indirectly by federal spending."

As this overview of the debate over military spending indicates, the military remains a hot topic more than two decades after the Cold War ended following the demise of the Soviet Union. As we move further into the twenty-first century, the issue of military spending will present a major challenge for US political and economic institutions to address in a way that meets America's international and domestic interests.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- War is a social phenomenon in which a mixture of motives underlies decisions to go to war.
- War has significant impacts, but perhaps most of all on civilians and veterans.
- US military spending amounts to more than \$1 trillion annually.
- Critics of the military budget say that the billions of dollars spent on weapons and other military needs would be better spent on domestic needs such as schools and day care.

FOR YOUR REVIEW

1. Do you think the US military budget should be increased, be reduced, or stay about the same? Explain your answer.
2. What do you think is the worst problem that veterans have faced in returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan? Why?

16.3 Terrorism

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Explain why terrorism is difficult to define.
2. List the major types of terrorism.
3. Evaluate the law enforcement and structural-reform approaches for dealing with terrorism.

Terrorism is hardly a new phenomenon, but Americans became horrifyingly familiar with it on September 11, 2001. The 9/11 attacks remain in the nation's consciousness, and many readers may know someone who died on that terrible day. The attacks also spawned a vast national security network that now reaches into almost every aspect of American life. This network is so secretive, so huge, and so expensive that no one really knows precisely how large it is or how much it costs (Priest & Arkin, 2010). Priest, D., & Arkin, W. M. (2010, July 20). A hidden world, growing beyond control. *The Washington Post*, p. A1. However, it is thought to include 1,200 government organizations, 1,900 private companies, and almost 900,000 people with security clearances (Applebaum, 2011). Applebaum, A. (2011, September 2). The price we paid for the war on terror. *The Washington Post*, p. A17. The United States has spent an estimated \$3 trillion since 9/11 on the war on terrorism, including more than \$1 trillion on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan whose relevance for terrorism has been sharply questioned. Questions of how best to deal with terrorism continue to be debated, and there are few, if any, easy answers to these questions.



The 9/11 attacks spawned an immense national security network and prompted the expenditure of more than \$3 trillion on the war against terrorism.

Image courtesy of Michael Foran, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/pixorama/239262070/in/pool-29934416@N00/>

Not surprisingly, sociologists and other scholars have written many articles and books about terrorism. This section draws on their work to discuss the definition of terrorism, the major types of terrorism, explanations for terrorism, and strategies for dealing with terrorism. An understanding of all these issues is essential to make sense of the concern and controversy about terrorism that exists throughout the world today.

Defining Terrorism

There is an old saying that “one person’s freedom fighter is another person’s terrorist.” This saying indicates some of the problems in defining terrorism precisely. Some years ago, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) waged a campaign of terrorism against the British government and its people as part of its effort to drive the British out of Northern Ireland. Many people in Northern Ireland and elsewhere hailed IRA members as freedom fighters, while many other people condemned them as cowardly terrorists. Although most of the world labeled the 9/11 attacks as terrorism, some individuals applauded them as acts of heroism. These examples indicate that there is only a thin line, if any, between terrorism on the one hand and freedom fighting and heroism on the other hand. Just as beauty is in the eyes of the beholder, so is terrorism. The same type of action is either terrorism or freedom fighting, depending on who is characterizing the action.

Although dozens of definitions of **terrorism**⁸ exist, most take into account what are widely regarded as the three defining features of terrorism: (a) the use of violence; (b) the goal of making people afraid; and (c) the desire for political, social, economic, and/or cultural change. A popular definition by political scientist Ted Robert Gurr (1989, p. 201)Gurr, T. R. (1989). *Political terrorism: Historical antecedents and contemporary trends*. In T. R. Gurr (Ed.), *Violence in America: Protest, rebellion, reform* (Vol. 2, pp. 201–230). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications. captures these features: “The use of unexpected violence to intimidate or coerce people in the pursuit of political or social objectives.”

Types of Terrorism

When we think about this definition, 9/11 certainly comes to mind, but there are, in fact, several kinds of terrorism—based on the identity of the actors and targets of terrorism—to which this definition applies. A typology of terrorism, again by Gurr (1989),Gurr, T. R. (1989). *Political terrorism: Historical antecedents and contemporary trends*. In T. R. Gurr (Ed.), *Violence in America: Protest, rebellion, reform* (Vol. 2, pp. 201–230). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications. is popular: (a) vigilante terrorism, (b) insurgent terrorism, (c) transnational (or international) terrorism, and (d) state terrorism. Table 16.3 "Types of Terrorism" summarizes these four types.



As the attacks on 9/11 remind us, terrorism involves the use of indiscriminate violence to instill fear in a population and thereby win certain political, economic, or social objectives.

Image courtesy of Bill Biggart, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/nostri-imago/4951407339>.

8. The use of unexpected violence to intimidate or coerce people in the pursuit of political or social objectives.

Table 16.3 Types of Terrorism

Vigilante terrorism	Violence committed by private citizens against other private citizens.
Insurgent terrorism	Violence committed by private citizens against their own government or against businesses and institutions seen as representing the “establishment.”
Transnational terrorism	Violence committed by citizens of one nation against targets in another nation.
State terrorism	Violence committed by a government against its own citizens.

Vigilante terrorism⁹ is committed by private citizens against other private citizens. Sometimes the motivation is racial, ethnic, religious, or other hatred, and sometimes the motivation is to resist social change. The violence of racist groups like the Ku Klux Klan was vigilante terrorism, as was the violence used by white Europeans against Native Americans from the 1600s through the 1800s. What we now call “hate crime” is a contemporary example of vigilante terrorism.

Insurgent terrorism¹⁰ is committed by private citizens against their own government or against businesses and institutions seen as representing the “establishment.” Insurgent terrorism is committed by both left-wing groups and right-wing groups and thus has no political connotation. US history is filled with insurgent terrorism, starting with some of the actions the colonists waged against British forces before and during the American Revolution, when “the meanest and most squalid sort of violence was put to the service of revolutionary ideals and objectives” (Brown, 1989, p. 25). Brown, R. M. (1989). Historical patterns of violence. In T. R. Gurr (Ed.), *Violence in America: Protest, rebellion, reform* (Vol. 2, pp. 23–61). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications. An example here is tarring and feathering: hot tar and then feathers were smeared over the unclothed bodies of Tories. Some of the labor violence committed after the Civil War also falls under the category of insurgent terrorism, as does some of the violence committed by left-wing groups during the 1960s and 1970s. A relatively recent example of right-wing insurgent terrorism is the infamous 1995 bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City by Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols that killed 168 people.

Transnational terrorism¹¹ is committed by the citizens of one nation against targets in another nation. This is the type that has most concerned Americans at least since 9/11, yet 9/11 was not the first time Americans had been killed by international terrorism. A decade earlier, a truck bombing at the World Trade Center killed six people and injured more than 1,000 others. In 1988, 189 Americans

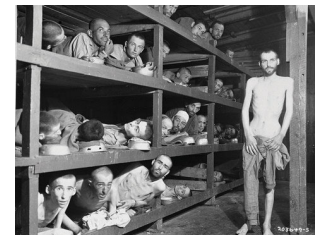
- 9. Terrorism committed by private citizens against other private citizens.
- 10. Terrorism committed by private citizens against their own government or against businesses and institutions seen as representing the “establishment.”
- 11. Terrorism committed by the citizens of one nation against targets in another nation.

were among the 259 passengers and crew who died when a plane bound for New York exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland; agents from Libya were widely thought to have planted the bomb. Despite all these American deaths, transnational terrorism has actually been much more common in several other nations: London, Madrid, and various cities in the Middle East have often been the targets of international terrorists.

State terrorism¹² involves violence by a government that is meant to frighten its own citizens and thereby stifle their dissent. State terrorism may involve mass murder, assassinations, and torture. Whatever its form, state terrorism has killed and injured more people than all the other kinds of terrorism combined (Gareau, 2010). Gareau, F. H. (2010). *State terrorism and the United States: From counterinsurgency to the war on terrorism*. Atlanta, GA: Clarity Press. Genocide, of course is the most deadly type of state terrorism, but state terrorism also occurs on a smaller scale. As just one example, the violent response of Southern white law enforcement officers to the civil rights protests of the 1960s amounted to state terrorism, as officers murdered or beat hundreds of activists during this period. Although state terrorism is usually linked to authoritarian regimes, many observers say the US government also engaged in state terror during the nineteenth century, when US troops killed thousands of Native Americans (D. A. Brown, 2009). Brown, D. A. (2009). *Bury my heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian history of the American west*. New York, NY: Sterling Innovation.

Explaining Terrorism

Why does terrorism occur? It is easy to assume that terrorists must have psychological problems that lead them to have sadistic personalities, and that they are simply acting irrationally and impulsively. However, most researchers agree that terrorists are psychologically normal despite their murderous violence and, in fact, are little different from other types of individuals who use violence for political ends. As one scholar observed, “Most terrorists are no more or less fanatical than the young men who charged into Union cannon fire at Gettysburg or those who parachuted behind German lines into France. They are no more or less cruel and coldblooded than the Resistance fighters who executed Nazi officials and collaborators in Europe, or the American GI’s ordered to ‘pacify’ Vietnamese villages” (Rubenstein, 1987, p. 5). Rubenstein, R. E. (1987). *Alchemists of revolution: Terrorism in the modern world*. New York, NY: Basic Books.



Genocide is the most deadly type of state terrorism. The Nazi holocaust killed some 6 million Jews and 6 million other people.

Image courtesy of US Holocaust Memorial Museum, National Archives and Records Administration, <http://commons.wikimedia.org/>

12. Violence by a government that is meant to frighten its own citizens and thereby stifle their dissent.

Contemporary terrorists tend to come from well-to-do families and to be well-educated themselves; ironically, their social backgrounds are much more advantaged in these respects than are those of common street criminals, despite the violence they commit.

[wiki/](#)
[File:Buchenwald_Survivors_74607.jpg](#).

If terrorism cannot be said to stem from individuals' psychological problems, then what are its roots? In answering this question, many scholars say that terrorism has structural roots. In this view, terrorism is a rational response, no matter how horrible it may be, to perceived grievances regarding economic, social, and/or political conditions (White, 2012). White, J. R. (2012). *Terrorism and homeland security: An introduction* (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. The heads of the US 9/11 Commission, which examined the terrorist attacks of that day, reflected this view in the following assessment: "We face a rising tide of radicalization and rage in the Muslim world—a trend to which our own actions have contributed. The enduring threat is not Osama bin Laden but young Muslims with no jobs and no hope, who are angry with their own governments and increasingly see the United States as an enemy of Islam" (Kean & Hamilton, 2007, p. B1). Kean, T. H., & Hamilton, L. H. (2007, September 9). Are we safer today? *The Washington Post*, p. B1. As this assessment indicates, structural conditions do not justify terrorism, of course, but they do help explain why some individuals decide to commit it.

The Impact of Terrorism

The major impact of terrorism is apparent from its definition, which emphasizes public fear and intimidation. Terrorism can work, or so terrorists believe, precisely because it instills fear and intimidation. Anyone who might have happened to be in or near New York City on 9/11 will always remember how terrified the local populace was to hear of the attacks and the fears that remained with them for the days and weeks that followed.

Another significant impact of terrorism is the response to it. As mentioned earlier, the 9/11 attacks led the United States to develop an immense national security network that defies description and expense, as well as the Patriot Act and other measures that some say threaten civil liberties; to start the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; and to spend more than \$3 trillion in just one decade on homeland security and the war against terrorism. Airport security increased, and Americans have grown accustomed to having to take off their shoes, display their liquids and gels in containers



Hardly anyone likes standing in the long airport security lines that are a result of the 9/11

limited to three ounces, and stand in long security lines as they try to catch their planes.

attacks. Some experts say that certain airport security measures are an unneeded response to these attacks.

People critical of these effects say that the “terrorists won,” and, for better or worse, they may be correct. As one columnist wrote on the tenth anniversary of 9/11, “And yet, 10 years after 9/11, it’s clear that the ‘war on terror’ was far too narrow a prism through which to see the planet. And the price we paid to fight it was far too high” (Applebaum, 2011, p. A17).Applebaum, A. (2011,

© Thinkstock

September 2). The price we paid for the war on terror. *The Washington Post*, p. A17. In this columnist’s opinion, the war on terror imposed huge domestic costs on the United States; it diverted US attention away from important issues regarding China, Latin America, and Africa; it aligned the United States with authoritarian regimes in the Middle East even though their authoritarianism helps inspire Islamic terrorism; and it diverted attention away from the need to invest in the American infrastructure: schools, roads, bridges, and medical and other research. In short, the columnist concluded, “in making Islamic terrorism our central priority—at times our only priority—we ignored the economic, environmental and political concerns of the rest of the globe. Worse, we pushed aside our economic, environmental and political problems until they became too great to be ignored” (Applebaum, 2011, p. A17).Applebaum, A. (2011, September 2). The price we paid for the war on terror. *The Washington Post*, p. A17.

To critics like this columnist, the threat to Americans of terrorism is “over-hyped” (Holland, 2011b).Holland, J. (2011, September 14). How fearmongering over terrorism is endangering American communities. *AlterNet*. Retrieved from http://www.alternet.org/story/152403/how_fearmongering_over_terrorism_is_skewing_our_priorities_and_putting_us_all_at_risk?page=entire. They acknowledge the 9/11 tragedy and the real fears of Americans, but they also point out that in the years since 9/11, the number of Americans killed in car accidents, by air pollution, by homicide, or even by dog bites or lightning strikes has greatly exceeded the number of Americans killed by terrorism. They add that the threat is overhyped because defense industry lobbyists profit from overhyped it and because politicians do not wish to be seen as “weak on terror.” And they also worry that the war on terror has been motivated by and also contributed to prejudice against Muslims (Kurzman, 2011).Kurzman, C. (2011, July 31). Where are all the Islamic terrorists? *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from http://chronicle.com/article/Where-Are-All-the-Islamic/128443/?sid=cr&utm_source=cr&utm_medium=en.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Terrorism involves the use of intimidating violence to achieve political ends. Whether a given act of violence is perceived as terrorism or as freedom fighting often depends on whether someone approves of the goal of the violence.
- Several types of terrorism exist. The 9/11 attacks fall into the transnational terrorism category.

FOR YOUR REVIEW

1. Do you think the US response to the 9/11 attacks has been appropriate, or do you think it has been too overdone? Explain your answer.
2. Do you agree with the view that structural problems help explain Middle Eastern terrorism? Why or why not?

16.4 Preventing War and Stopping Terrorism

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Outline approaches that show promise for preventing war.
2. Understand the differences between the law enforcement and structural-reform approaches to preventing terrorism.

War has existed since prehistoric times, and terrorism goes back at least to the days of the Old Testament (e.g., when Samson brought down the temple of the Philistines in an act of suicide that also killed scores of Philistines). Given their long histories, war and terrorism are not easy to prevent. However, theory and research by sociologists and other social scientists point to several avenues that may ultimately help make the world more peaceful.

Preventing War

The usual strategies suggested by political scientists and international relations experts to prevent war include arms control and diplomacy. Approaches to arms control and diplomacy vary in their actual and potential effectiveness. The historical and research literatures on these approaches are vast (Daase & Meier, 2012; Garcia, 2012)Daase, C., & Meier, O. (Eds.). (2012). *Arms control in the 21st century: Between coercion and cooperation*. New York, NY: Routledge; Garcia, D. (2012). *Disarmament diplomacy and human security: Regimes, norms, and moral progress in international relations*. New York, NY: Routledge. and beyond the scope of this chapter. Regardless of the specific approaches taken, suffice it here to say that arms control and diplomacy will always remain essential strategies to prevent war, especially in the nuclear age when humanity is only minutes away from possible destruction.

Beyond these two essential strategies, the roots of war must also be addressed. As discussed earlier, war is a social, not biological, phenomenon and arises from decisions by political and military leaders to go to war. There is ample evidence that deceit accompanies many of these decisions, as leaders go to many wars for less than noble purposes. To the extent this is true, citizens must always be ready to question any rationales given for war, and a free press in a democracy must exercise eternal vigilance in reporting on these rationales. According to critics, the press and the public were far too acquiescent in the decision to go to war in Iraq in 2003, just as they had been acquiescent a generation earlier when the Vietnam War

began being waged (Solomon, 2006). Solomon, N. (2006). *War made easy: How presidents and pundits keep spinning us to death* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. To prevent war, then, the press and the public must always be ready to question assumptions about the necessity of war. The same readiness should occur in regard to militarism and the size of the military budget.

In this regard, history shows that social movements can help prevent or end armament and war and limit the unchecked use of military power once war has begun (Breyman, 2001; Staggenborg, 2010). Breyman, S. (2001). *Why movements matter: The west German peace movement and US arms control policy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press; Staggenborg, S. (2010). *Social movements*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. While activism is no guarantee of success, responsible nonviolent protest against war and militarism provides an important vehicle for preventing war or for more quickly ending a war once it has begun.

People Making a Difference

Speaking Truth to Power

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a Quaker organization that has long worked for peace and social justice. Its national office is in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and it has local offices in more than thirty other US cities and also in more than a dozen other nations.

AFSC was established in 1917 to help conscientious objectors serve their country in nonmilitary ways during World War I. After that war ended with the defeat of Germany and Austria, AFSC provided food to thousands of German and Austrian children. It helped Jewish refugees after Hitler came to power, and sent various forms of aid to Japan after World War II ended. During the 1960s, it provided nonviolence training for civil rights activists and took a leading role in the movement to end the Vietnam War. Since the 1960s, AFSC has provided various types of help to immigrants, migrant workers, prisoners, and other “have-not” groups in need of social justice. It also works to achieve nonviolent conflict resolution in urban communities and spoke out against plans to begin war in Iraq in 2003.

In 1947, AFSC and its British counterpart won the Nobel Peace Prize for their aid to hungry children and other Europeans during and after World Wars I and II. The Nobel committee proclaimed in part, “The Quakers have shown us that it is possible to carry into action something which is deeply rooted in the minds of many: sympathy with others; the desire to help others...without regard to nationality or race; feelings which, when carried into deeds, must provide the foundations of a lasting peace.”

For almost a century, the American Friends Service Committee has been active in many ways to achieve a more just, peaceable world. It deserves the world’s thanks for helping to make a difference. For further information, visit <http://www.afsc.org>.

As we think about how to prevent war, we must not forget two important types of changes that create pressures for war: population change and environmental change. Effective efforts to reduce population growth in the areas of the world where it is far too rapid will yield many benefits, but one of these is a lower

likelihood that certain societies will go to war. Effective efforts to address climate change will also yield many benefits, and one of these is also a lower likelihood of war and ethnic conflict in certain parts of the world.

Finally, efforts to prevent war must keep in mind the fact that ideological differences and prejudice sometimes motivate decisions to go to war. It might sound rather idealistic to say that governments and their citizenries should respect ideological differences and not be prejudiced toward people who hold different religious or other ideologies or have different ethnic backgrounds. However, any efforts by international bodies, such as the United Nations, to achieve greater understanding along these lines will limit the potential for war and other armed conflict. The same potential holds true for efforts to increase educational attainment within the United States and other industrial nations but especially within poor nations. Because prejudice generally declines as education increases, measures that raise educational attainment promise to reduce the potential for armed conflict in addition to the other benefits of increased education.

In addition to these various strategies to prevent war, it is also vital to reduce the size of the US military budget. Defense analysts who think this budget is too high have proposed specific cuts in weapons systems that are not needed and in military personnel at home and abroad who are not needed (Arquilla & Fogelson-Lubliner, 2011; Knight, 2011; Sustainable Defense Task Force, 2010). Arquilla, J., & Fogelson-Lubliner. (2011, March 13). The Pentagon's biggest boondoggles. *New York Times*, p. WK12; Knight, C. (2011). *Strategic adjustment to sustain the force: A survey of current proposals*. Cambridge, MA: Project on Defense Alternatives; Sustainable Defense Task Force. (2010). *Debt, deficits, & defense: A way forward*. Cambridge, MA: Project on Defense Alternatives. Making these cuts would save the nation from \$100 billion to \$150 billion annually without at all endangering national security. This large sum could then be spent to help meet the nation's many unmet domestic needs.

Stopping Terrorism

Because of 9/11 and other transnational terrorism, most analyses of "stopping terrorism" focus on this specific type. Traditional efforts to stop transnational terrorism take two forms (White, 2012). White, J. R. (2012). *Terrorism and homeland security: An introduction* (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. The first strategy involves attempts to capture known terrorists and to destroy their camps and facilities and is commonly called a *law enforcement* or *military* approach. The second strategy stems from the recognition of the structural roots of terrorism just described and is often called a *structural-reform* approach. Each approach has many advocates among terrorism experts, and each approach has many critics.

Law enforcement and military efforts have been known to weaken terrorist forces, but terrorist groups have persisted despite these measures. Worse yet, these measures may ironically inspire terrorists to commit further terrorism and increase public support for their cause. Critics also worry that the military approach endangers civil liberties, as the debate over the US response to terrorism since 9/11 so vividly illustrates (Cole & Lobel, 2007). Cole, D., & Lobel, J. (2007). *Less safe, less free: Why America is losing the war on terror*. New York, NY: New Press. This debate took an interesting turn in late 2010 amid the increasing use of airport scanners that generate body images. Many people criticized the scanning as an invasion of privacy, and they also criticized the invasiveness of the “pat-down” searches that were used for people who chose not to be scanned (Reinberg, 2010). Reinberg, S. (2010, November 23). Airport body scanners safe, experts say. *Bloomberg Businessweek*. Retrieved from <http://www.businessweek.com>.

In view of all these problems, many terrorism experts instead favor the structural-reform approach, which they say can reduce terrorism by improving or eliminating the conditions that give rise to the discontent that leads individuals to commit terrorism. Here again the assessment of the heads of the 9/11 Commission illustrates this view: “We must use all the tools of U.S. power—including foreign aid, educational assistance and vigorous public diplomacy that emphasizes scholarship, libraries and exchange programs—to shape a Middle East and a Muslim world that are less hostile to our interests and values. America’s long-term security relies on being viewed not as a threat but as a source of opportunity and hope” (Kean & Hamilton, 2007, p. B1). Kean, T. H., & Hamilton, L. H. (2007, September 9). Are we safer today? *The Washington Post*, p. B1.

Although there are no easy solutions to transnational terrorism, then, efforts to stop this form of terrorism must not neglect its structural roots. As long as these roots persist, new terrorists will come along to replace any terrorists who are captured or killed. Such recognition of the ultimate causes of transnational terrorism is thus essential for the creation of a more peaceable world.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Arms control and diplomacy remain essential strategies for stopping war, but the roots of war must also be addressed.
- The law enforcement/military approach to countering terrorism may weaken terrorist groups, but it also may increase their will to fight and popular support for their cause and endanger civil liberties.

FOR YOUR REVIEW

1. Do you think deceit was involved in the decision of the United States to go to war against Iraq in 2003? Why or why not?
2. Which means of countering terrorism do you prefer more, the law enforcement/military approach or the structural-reform approach? Explain your answer.

16.5 End-of-Chapter Material

SUMMARY

1. President Eisenhower warned of the dangers of a high military budget and the militarism of the United States.
2. War actually serves several functions according to functional theory, but conflict theory emphasizes the many problems war causes and the role played in militarism by the military-industrial complex. Symbolic interactionism focuses on the experiences of soldiers and civilians in the military and in wartime and on their perceptions of war and the military.
3. War is best regarded as a social phenomenon rather than a biological phenomenon. Decisions to go to war are sometimes based on noble reasons, but they also involve deceit and prejudice.
4. Civilians and veterans are both victims of war. Civilian deaths in war are almost inevitable, and atrocities are far from rare. American veterans are at greater risk for PTSD, unemployment, and several other problems that also affect their families.
5. The United States has the highest military budget by far in the world. Debate continues over the size of this budget; critics say that the United States would have a higher quality of life if the military budget were reduced and the saved dollars spent on unmet social needs.
6. Terrorism is best regarded as rational behavior committed for political reasons rather than as psychologically abnormal behavior. The US response to the 9/11 attacks has cost hundreds of billions of dollars, and critics say that the war on terrorism has both exaggerated the threat of terrorism and diverted attention and funds from unmet social needs.

USING WHAT YOU KNOW

You are a key aide to a US senator who has been asked to participate in a university forum on the size of the US military budget. The senator asks you to write a memo for her that summarizes the arguments on both sides of debate on the military budget and that also indicates your own view of what position the senator should take on this debate. What position will you recommend to the senator? Explain your answer in detail.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

To help deal with the problems of war and terrorism discussed in this chapter, you may wish to do any of the following:

1. Educate yourself about the military budget and publish a pamphlet on the web and/or in print that critically examines the size of this budget.
2. Form or join a peace group on your campus or in the surrounding community that calls attention to the various problems related to the military that were discussed in this chapter.
3. Because prejudice against Muslims increased after 9/11, form or join a group in your campus or surrounding community that seeks to improve relations between Muslims and non-Muslims.