

The \$5.6 Trillion Price Tag of the Post-9/11 Wars

Summary of Report by Neta C. Crawford, Boston University*

➤ **The post-9/11 wars have cost at least \$5.6 trillion**

The United States wars in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, and the increased spending on Homeland Security, the Departments of Defense, State, and Veterans Affairs since the 9/11 attacks have cost more than \$4.3 trillion in current dollars through FY2017. Adding likely costs for FY2018 and estimated future obligations for veterans' care, the costs of war total more than \$5.6 trillion.

➤ **This accounting does not include every expenditure**

Not included in this estimate, for example, are the substantial costs to state and local governments of caring for veterans, and millions in US donations of excess military equipment to countries in and near the war zones. Furthermore, the report focuses on spending on counterterrorism in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria and the US but not in every other area where the US is conducting counterterror operations.

➤ **The average American taxpayer has spent \$23,386 on these wars since 2001**

In comparison, the Department of Defense's calculations of the "Estimated Cost to Each Taxpayer for the Wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria" (July 2017) was \$7,740.

➤ **Future interest payments on borrowing for these wars will likely add more than \$7.9 trillion to the national debt**

Unlike past US wars, these wars have been paid for largely through borrowing. The \$5.6 trillion includes the interest the US has already paid on this debt, but it does *not* include projected future interest. Even if the US stopped spending money on these wars right now, cumulated interest costs on borrowing will ultimately add more than \$7.9 trillion to the national debt over the next several decades.

➤ **Veterans' health care and disability costs are also growing**

Each year, as these wars continue, tens of thousands of new veterans become eligible for healthcare and disability payments from the VA.

Contact information: crawfor@bu.edu

Website: <http://www.bu.edu/polisci/people/faculty/crawford/>

* "United States Budgetary Costs of Post-9/11 Wars Through FY2018: A Summary of the \$5.6 Trillion in Costs for the US Wars in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Post-9/11 Veterans Care and Homeland Security," November 2017, www.costsofwar.org.