

Introductory Discussion Questions

Warm-up Activity:

The Post-9/11 wars have been raging since 2001. The U.S.-led war in Afghanistan is the longest in U.S. history. Take a moment to reflect on the ways you, your family, or your community have experienced the wars. What is your first memory of learning that the United States was at war? What other memories of these or other wars do you have from your childhood? How often do you think about the fact that the US is at war? Have the wars changed your day-to-day life in any way? Where have you learned things about the wars? Who taught you about war, and what did you learn?

Discussion Questions:

1. How does the Costs of War Project define the costs of war? Do you agree with this definition? How might you broaden or narrow the costs of war?
2. \$5.6 trillion is a large, abstract number. How might we better conceptualize the economic costs of war? How might \$5.6 trillion be used across other sectors? How does \$5.6 trillion compare to costs of education, healthcare, environmental protection, or other domestic programs?
3. Do you think the costs of the Post-9/11 wars are different from the costs of previous wars? In what ways has the government shifted the burden of the financial costs? How might this impact future generations?
4. The Loyd piece and the New York Times podcast, The Daily, consider the costs of war to civilians in other nations, particularly Iraq. What are some of the costs to the nations targeted by U.S. military action? Are those costs something we should be considering when we think about military actions?
5. How do the costs of war affect veterans and active duty military members? What about their families? How are domestic communities affected by the military?
6. Was a U.S. "War on Terror" inevitable?
7. Who has suffered from the post-9/11 wars? Who has benefited? How and why?
8. What are the direct and opportunity costs of the U.S. government's budgetary investment in war? How else could the U.S. have spent \$8 trillion in taxpayer and borrowed funds that have gone to the post-9/11 wars?
9. What is the value of understanding the wars quantitatively through body counts and dollars in addition to or versus qualitatively through individuals' accounts of their experiences of injury, dislocation, etc.?

10. What kinds of international media coverage and tropes have characterized these wars? How have the visuals of these wars shaped public opinion in their respective countries?
11. How has the modern Middle East been shaped geopolitically by these wars?
12. What characterizes the macroeconomics of Iraq/Afghanistan/Pakistan/Syria/Yemen during the last 20 years? What are the direct and indirect economic consequences for the citizens of those countries?
13. How has U.S. public opinion changed over the years of the wars?
14. Given that gender equality was placed front and center in both official and public discussions of the wars, how have women fared over the several decades of war?
15. Are you concerned about the costs of the Post-9/11 wars? If so, why? What do you think the general public might do to address your concerns?