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INTERNATIONAL CRIME ACCOUNTABILITY IN
THE WAKE OF CONFLICT – A STUDY OF US
WAR CRIMES POST-1991**

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UNVEILING SHADOWS OF POWER: EXAMINING INTERNATIONAL CRIME ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE WAKE OF CONFLICT – A STUDY OF US WAR CRIMES POST-1991

Dr. Zaid Mustafa Alvi¹ and Dr. Sana Haider²

ABSTRACT

The end of the Cold War brought with it the hope that new, more peaceful, and prosperous times were ahead. Instead, we now witness a resurgence in geopolitical tensions and increase fears of nuclear war. These fears have been fueled by an increasingly volatile global environment and multiple international flashpoints. As the world continues to reel from an era of political and social tumult, there is another unnerving reality: We are also living in one of the most dangerous periods in modern history. Whereas previous generations lived with the specter of nuclear annihilation, our generation has seen nearly unparalleled crimes against humanity committed on a global scale. But what has caused this strange dichotomy of peace and violence? This article explores some of the calamitous consequences arising from the U.S.'s post-Cold War foreign policy – a period marked by economic collapse, social upheaval, and blatant imperialism. This article will highlight the war crimes committed by one of the superpowers, i.e., the United States.

KEYWORDS

United States, Drones, War on Terror, 9/11, War Crimes, Crimes against Humanity

1. INTRODUCTION

Whether a war in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Ukraine, Yemen, etc., civilians

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carry the burden of the conflict. Civilian protection, along with those who are not anymore involved in warfare, constitutes the core of International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the law governing the conduct of war.¹

During the past years, mass media has reported war crimes around the globe which are being tormented and "molested" by wars. War crimes are classified as the most heinous international offenses. However, what is a war crime?

According to the ICRC, substantial abuses of the rules and norms applicable in non-international armed conflicts within the context of international law constitute war crimes.² These are any acts mentioned in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

A war crime is a demonstration that includes a severe violation of the laws of war, resulting in individual criminal responsibility.³ Examples of criminal activities include the intentional killing of detainees or ordinary people, demolishing civilian properties, torture, seizure of hostages, rapes, etc.,

However, the theory of war crime has archaic roots; laws on war crimes began to originate under the 1907 Convention IV (Regulation concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land).⁴ According to Convention IV, the attack or bombardment, by whatever means, of towns, villages, dwellings, or buildings which are undefended is prohibited.⁵ The Convention also banned the commission of other atrocities during times of war. These enforce some obligations on the conflicting parties regarding the "seizure of, and destruction, or intentional damage done to such institutions, to historical monuments, works of art or science, is prohibited, and should be made the subject of proceedings."⁶ The 1907 "Convention integrated natural law and customary law into conventional international law, and it was a step towards the creation of international humanitarian law."⁷ Hereafter, the international conventions played a part in directly

acknowledging the presence of judicial authority for safeguarding the world civilization at the outset of the twentieth century.

In this article, we have tried to cover all the things and incidents the world should know regarding America's War crimes in the aftermath of the cold war, as well as the details on which the other nations have been impacted by the attacks of the United States, the kinds of offenses committed by armed forces internationally; how many people have been murdered since then and much more.

1.1. The War Crimes Commission Act of 1991

The post-Cold War era has been marked by an uptick in rhetoric and actions that may pose a threat to international security and peace. A common concern has been the emergence of nuclear powers with aggressive nuclear doctrines and a tendency to engage in combat without regard to any rules of engagement. The War Crimes Commission Act of 1991 led to the creation of the U.S. Office of Special Investigations (OSI) to investigate war crimes committed by the

U.S. Armed Forces. The OSI is a division within the Department of Defense that focuses on investigating war crimes allegedly committed by American military members abroad. The OSI is primarily concerned with investigating cases where American military members are accused of committing war crimes against civilians. The OSI is also responsible for investigating claims of torture committed by the United States. This is particularly relevant as the United States has been at the center of controversy over the treatment of detainees in its custody.

Since 1991, the U.S. has perpetrated war crimes and human rights abuses in its war against other states. The Country has an extensive as well as a bloody history of war crimes. War crimes have been a part of the Country's history since ancient times and have continued to the present day. From the massacre of Native Americans⁸ to the nuclear attack on the two

Japanese cities during the Second World War, i.e., Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which leads to the death of approximately 1,05,000 people,⁹ the U.S. has displayed a readiness to murder on a large scale. While these were terrible moments in American history, it has become increasingly clear that these and other similar events were motivated by a self-interested and often imperialistic agenda rather than a genuine concern for justice or democracy. In fact, following the official formation of the Country in 1776 as an independent nation, the United States has been engaged in more wars and conflicts compared to other countries across the globe. This can be attributed to the U.S. being a powerful nation with strong military capabilities and an ambition to spread democracy across the world, which has led to the U.S. intervening in various conflicts, whether directly or indirectly, throughout its history from the Spanish-American War to the Vietnam War and more recently, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, these interventions have often caused chaos and destruction in the affected countries, not to mention thousands of casualties and a high financial cost. At the same time, this is not the issue for many homo sapiens; other views it as a significant problem that deserves our attention and concern from people worldwide. Therefore, everyone must receive education regarding these war crimes along with the violations of human rights so that they can aim to stop them from taking place again in the near future. It is essential that people understand the ramifications of war crimes and human rights violations so they can take steps to prevent them from occurring and ensure the safety and well-being of all people worldwide.

The United States has had no hesitation in waging war since 1991, and the Country has started invasions, occupations, as well as Drone strikes internationally on the grounds of seeking peace and security. Although, this behavior comes with its fair share of troubles and challenges as well as dangers for anyone who tries to navigate it most of the time. The effects and repercussions of conducting a war go beyond physical injuries and

psychological trauma. The simple scale of war also affects the cultural environment on a grand level in an incalculable and equally inescapable manner.

The U.S. has played an important military, diplomatic, as well as an economic role in nearly every conflict or war in the aftermath of the Second World War. The nation's engagement in these wars ranges from direct military operations to more puzzling assisting and supporting roles, including sharing intelligence or selling weapons. The frequency of the United States' involvement has grown in the past few years, with many of the Country's most recent military involvement happening since 1991.

The United States has one of the most codified military codes of rules regarding war as well as global conflicts. The rules and regulations are as old as the nation itself and received directly from the Geneva Conventions as well as other identical agreements and treaties. You would be shocked to learn that breaches of U.S. war laws are not infrequent, mainly following the U.S. as an international superpower and an ally with numerous nations across the globe.

In recent times, the U.S has been particularly criticised for failing to abide by its own rules, from its involvement in Iraq to targeted killings using drones in Afghanistan and other war-torn countries. While the United States military is often held up to a higher standard than other nations due to its power and influence, this does not excuse it from adhering to the same rules of war that it expects others to follow. As a result, the U.S government must work to hold its military accountable to uphold international humanitarian law and ensure that it is not infringing upon the rights of individuals in war zones.

2. THE UNITED STATES COMMITS WAR CRIMES. HERE IS WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW

The United States has a long record of committing war crimes, followed in

the 21st century. Since 1991 and in the aftermath of the Cold War, the U.S. has been directly or indirectly involved in conflicts and wars across the globe that have caused mass abuses of human rights and war crimes. This part will examine several examples of US-led war crimes committed after the cold war. This part regarding US-led war crimes is further divided into three sections. The first section delves into a few of the major causes behind the prevalence of war crimes committed by the U.S. since the Cold War. The second section details instances of particular war crimes initiated by the U.S., its allied partners, and non-state actors operating in the regions under the control of the U.S. The third section will explain how these war crimes might affect future international relations and domestic politics and why it is essential for everyone to understand them.

2.1. Yugoslavia and Croatia

The 1990s saw a period of unparalleled unbalance and instability in the former Yugoslavia, particularly the Balkan region. The situation in Yugoslavia became precarious during the 1990s because of the collapse of the Soviet Union and widespread disillusionment with communism throughout Europe. As a result of the increased instability and conflict, the U.S. government recognized the potential to use the situation in Yugoslavia as a geopolitical tool. During the early 1990s, the U.S. actively intervened in the Yugoslav civil war supporting Croatia, which was at the time an ally of the U.S. and a NATO member. From 1991 until 1995, the U.S. provided Croatia with military aid, training, and diplomatic support, in a direct violation of international law. For example, the U.S. government provided Croatia with training in military tactics that did not apply to Croatia, such as handling civil unrest. The U.S. also directly intervened in the Yugoslav civil war by supporting the Croatian military's decision to bomb the majority Serbian city of Zagreb in order to weaken the Yugoslav government and provide a pretext for Croatian military intervention.

During the break-up of Yugoslavia, an estimated 20,000 people were killed

during conflicts in the 1990s. Croatia was one of the first countries to sign a peace treaty after the break up of the federation. However, the media did not report that the people who signed the treaty were brutally tortured, kidnapped, and even killed. Croatian authorities have tried to cover up the crimes. They have even presented some victims as individuals who made claims against the

country, violating international norms and agreements. The Yugoslavian war crimes, especially in Croatia, have been widely reported over the years.

In 1999, NATO conducted an air raid against Yugoslavia during the Kosovo war.¹⁰ The air raids lasted for 78 days, from March 24-June 10, 1999. The aerial bombings continued until they had been agreed upon, resulting in the retreat of Yugoslav military troops from Kosovo and the creation of the U.N. Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo. The campaign was the longest in the history of NATO, with over 38,000 sorties flown and an estimated \$3.5 billion spent on the effort. The campaign was both successful and unsuccessful. The success of the campaign was seen in the retreat of Yugoslav military troops, however it also resulted in the displacement of around a million people and significant damage to Kosovo's infrastructure. In addition to the destruction and displacement of innocent civilians, there were also international concerns about the legal aspects of the bombing campaign as it was not sanctioned by the U.N. Security Council.

As a result of the air strikes by the NATO forces, approximately 1,000 Yugoslavian soldiers and 550 civilians were killed. According to some of the Yugoslav officials say that the damage from NATO bombs has reached the \$100 billion mark.¹¹ This comes as no surprise, considering the devastating effects of the air strikes, which destroyed vital infrastructure and caused large-scale civilian displacement. The air strikes have had a long-term impact on the entire region, with effects that are still being felt to this day. In addition to the extensive loss of life and property, the air strikes also

resulted in a deep mistrust of the West by many Yugoslavian citizens, which has since had a significant impact on the political landscape in the region. This mistrust has manifested itself in the form of various anti-Western sentiments, ranging from open hostility to a passive rejection of Western values and policies.

2.2. *Somalia*

In Somalia, the United States, besides providing arms and ammunition to the warlords, actively participated in the fighting. This led to the death of thousands of people and left the Country in ruins. The US-backed warlords were responsible for the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people who still live in refugee camps. The U.S. and its allies have also been accused of abusing the refugees and even committing war crimes against them. Also important to note is that the U.S. has been accused of providing funding and arms to Al-Shabab, an extremist group based in Somalia responsible for terrorist attacks against civilians in the region. The U.S. has also been accused of ignoring the human rights abuses that occur in the Country due to its military and economic interests there.

In 2019, three men killed in a U.S. military air strike in March after being targeted as "Al-Shabaab terrorists" were, in fact, civilian farmers with no evidence of links to the armed group.¹² This is just one of many cases of the U.S. military wantonly tarnishing large parts of the Somali population with the 'terrorist' label. No thought is given to the civilian victims or the plight of their grieving families left behind."¹³

According to Amnesty International's reports, by the end of 2019, there were at least six cases where U.S. air bombings are presumed to have caused enormous civilian deaths, killing 17 civilians and wounding eight.¹⁴ The reports found that the air bombing of residential areas in Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq by the U.S. violated international humanitarian law, as such attacks can only be permissible if the civilian casualties can be

justified as necessary and proportionate to the anticipated military advantage. Despite these reports, the U.S government has failed to take responsibility and provide compensation for the victims and their families. This demonstrates a gross disregard for the laws of war, which should be taken seriously and applied in order to avoid unnecessary suffering and loss of life. It is a shame that the United States government has failed to recognize its responsibility for civilian deaths and that it does not offer the victims and their families adequate compensation for such devastating losses.

During Trump's presidency, the air raids in the Country increased in early 2017. AFRICOM has used drones and human-crewed aircraft to conduct approximately 131 strikes in Somalia. These air raids were highly controversial and raised criticism from human rights groups due to the potential for civilian casualties. The air raids sparked an outcry from the international community and human rights groups voicing their concerns over the lack of transparency, due process and the potential for civilian casualties caused by the air raids. The U.S. government has stated that the strikes are necessary to combat terrorist organizations, such as Al-Shabab and the Islamic State in Somalia. Despite the U.S. government's justification for the air strikes, many questions remain unanswered, and concerns about civilian casualties from the strikes remain.

In the following table, I tried to show the total strikes and fatality estimates in the Country:

Administration	Strikes			Deaths	
	Total	Civilians	Unknown	Militants	Total
Bush	12	26 – 68	13 – 21	38 – 55	77 – 144
Obama	48	1 – 22	10	338 – 521	349 – 553
Trump	202	6 – 30	34 – 39	1,014 – 1,119	1,054 – 1,188
Biden	11	0	0	27 – 105	27 – 105
Total	273	33 – 120	57 – 70	1,417 – 1,800	1,507 – 1,990

2.3. *Libya and Syria*

In 2011, the United States and NATO were heavily involved in the overthrow of the government in Libya. However, the breakdown of law and order as a result of the war led to the death of thousands of people and left millions displaced. Questions have also been raised about the role of the U.S. and NATO in the rise of ISIS and other extremist groups in the region. The U.S. has even been accused of funding the overthrow of the Syrian government by the same group of individuals who later formed ISIS. In Syria, the U.S. has also been accused of arming rebel groups such as the Al-Nusra Front, a group accused of committing war crimes.

In 2018, U.S.-led airstrikes in Libyan City, Al Uwaynat, killed eleven people on the basis that they were terrorists. However, those young men were completely against Terrorism¹⁵, according to the brother of one of the victims. This discrepancy between the assumptions of the U.S government and the reality on the ground in Al Uwaynat highlights the dangers of a heavy reliance on airstrikes as a tool of military policy without the necessary intelligence and understanding of local conditions and people.

In Syria, the U.S. illegally intervened in the Syrian civil war by bombing the de-escalation zones agreed upon by Russia and the U.S., leading to a setback in the fight against ISIS. In Libya, the U.S. also violated international law by participating in a coalition that illegally bombed civilians and humanitarian sites and directly aided the overthrow of the Libyan government. The U.S. used its air power in Syria and Libya to bomb civilian sites, including hospitals, schools, and other civilian infrastructure. The U.S. also illegally bombed the Syrian city of Idlib, forcing political choices conducive to the U.S.-backed Syrian government. In 2017, the U.S. military used some of the largest conventional bombs in the U.S. arsenal, including at least one BLU-109 bunker-buster bomb designed to destroy thick concrete structures¹⁶ that destroyed the Tabqa Dam, which was on a "no-strike list" of protected civilian sites. This created

a humanitarian crisis for millions of civilians who were without access to clean water, electricity, and basic medical care following the destruction of the dam. Additionally, the U.S military campaign inflicted millions of dollars in economic damages and caused the displacement of many thousands of Syrians from their homes. With the loss of the Tabqa Dam and other civilian sites, the devastating effects of the U.S military campaign in Syria is undeniable. With devastating consequences of this military campaign, it is essential for the U.S government to address the humanitarian crisis that resulted from the destruction of these civilian sites and ensure that the civilians of Syria receive assistance from the international community.

The most infamous example of U.S. coalition bombing, however, took place in the city of Mosul in Iraq, where the U.S.-led coalition bombed a civilian site containing a primary school, killing a large number of civilians. Coalition bombing campaigns also led to the destruction of civilian infrastructures, such as bridges and roads. The tragic loss of life and destruction of civilian infrastructures in Mosul and other areas of Iraq serves as a stark reminder of the devastating consequences that unchecked military power can bring if not properly monitored and used in accordance with international law and humanitarian principles. The consequences of coalition bombing campaigns in Iraq, especially in Mosul, demonstrate the need for accountability and transparency when powerful states use military power in pursuit of their geopolitical goals.

The U.S. also committed war crimes in Libya when it deployed its military to aid the overthrow of the Libyan government by bombing civilian and humanitarian sites. During the intervention, the U.S. also illegally targeted and arrested many Libyan citizens suspected of supporting the Libyan government. This illegal activity resulted in a gross violation of human rights and international law, as well as a serious breach of the United Nations Security Council resolution that was in place at the time of the

intervention. Moreover, there was clear evidence that the U.S government was fully aware of the laws they were violating and yet they chose to ignore them which further highlights the immorality of their actions and their complete disregard for international law and human rights.

2.4. Afghanistan invasion of 2001 and the beginning of the War on Terror

The invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 was primarily based on the false notion that many Al- Qaeda operatives were hiding out in the Country. This notion was proven to be false and the invasion led to chaos and destruction of the Country, with little regard for the people that lived there. Initially, there was support from the public and even the government regarding the war in Afghanistan. However, as the conflict continued and casualties rose, public opinion slowly began to shift and many began to question the efficacy of the mission and whether the sacrifices being made were truly justified. The invasion had nothing to do with the 9/11 attacks but was instead a move to create a pipeline route to take control of the region's natural resources, namely Afghanistan's oil, gas and gold supplies. The Bush administration justified the invasion of Afghanistan by claiming the Country was harboring terrorists and posed a threat to U.S. security. However, this justification was later revealed to be a façade, as evidence showed that U.S. interests in the region were primarily economic rather than political. Further complicating the invasion, news reports showed that not only were U.S. economic interests being served, but that the U.S. was also planning to use Afghanistan to further their military agenda in other Middle Eastern countries. This agenda was to be achieved by using Afghanistan as a staging ground for military operations in the region.

In the War on Terror, the U.S. has committed numerous war crimes violating international law and the U.S. Constitution. The U.S. government has used its military and paramilitary forces worldwide to launch drone strikes, which have killed thousands of people, including many civilians.

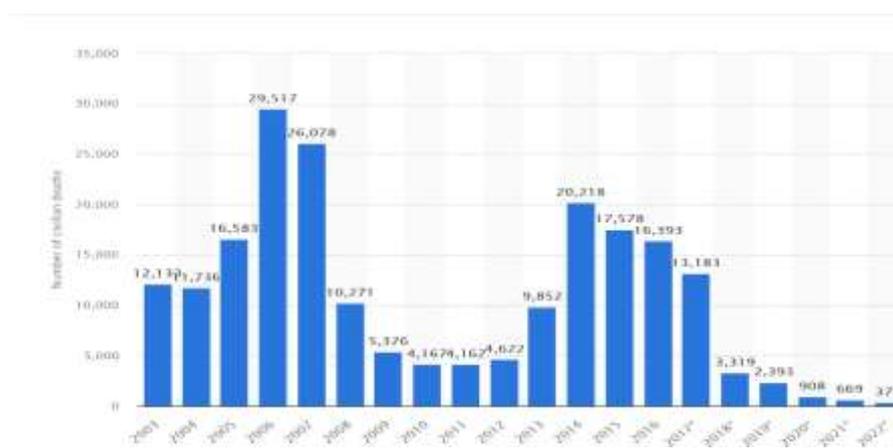
A drone strike is a terrorist act —not an act of war, as the U.S. government claims. The U.S. government justifies drone strikes as part of the so-called war on terror, but it does not have the right to use force outside the Constitution's parameters. The U.S. government also uses torture to interrogate prisoners, including waterboarding and other physical and psychological torture. The United States is bound by the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (better known as the "Convention Against Torture"). The Convention prohibits torture and requires that the U.S. government must not allow torture to be used in any way.

The U.S. War on Terror has been marred by numerous war crimes, including human rights violations and the killing of innocent civilians. There is little doubt that the use of drones to launch strikes violates international law and, more importantly, the U.S Constitution. The government's justification for using these tactics does not stand up to scrutiny and fails to recognize that a drone strike is not an act of war but an act of terrorism. These actions have also led to prisoner abuse and other serious breaches of human rights. There is no justifiable excuse for the War Crimes committed by the U.S. in the name of the War on Terror and it is time for the U.S. government to acknowledge these violations, apologize for them, and make amends for their actions.

2.5. *The U.S.-Led Invasion of Iraq and Aftermath*

The invasion of Iraq in 2003 was another American war crime that violated several laws and norms. The invasion aimed at overthrowing Iraq's government, which had nothing to do with 9/11. The invasion was also based on the false notion that Iraq had a large stockpile of weapons of mass destruction. The invasion was also launched without a U.N. Security Council Resolution enabling the use of force. The invasion and the years that followed have led to the death of thousands of people and the displacements of millions of others.

During the invasion of Iraq, the U.S. government committed numerous war crimes by violating international law, the Constitution, and the human rights of the Iraqi people. For example, the U.S. government violated international law by invading a sovereign nation without a direct threat to the U.S. national interest and without a U.N. Security Council resolution authorizing war. The U.S. government also violated the Constitution by waging an illegal war without congressional authorization. The US-led invasion also threatened Iraq's water and sanitation systems by causing extensive damage to the Country's infrastructure. The invasion of Iraq also led to the violation of the human rights of the Iraqi people. For example, the invasion led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, many of whom were forced to leave their homes and become refugees.



No. of documented civilian deaths in the Iraq War from 2003 to July 2022.

It was estimated that the US-supported military crusade in the Country resulted in \$45.7 billion in damage to the Country's houses, power plants, schools, and other civilian infrastructure.¹⁷

This staggering cost highlights the devastating effect that the war had on the Country's civilian population and paints a vivid picture of the destruction it caused throughout the Country. Unfortunately, this figure does not take into account the loss of life that the war brought or the psychological trauma it inflicted upon the survivors of the conflict, which

can never be measured in terms of financial cost.

The U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, which was premised on false claims of weapons of mass destruction, had paleo-oligarchic undertones. As evidence of the presence of WMDs was never found, it is clear that the invasion was based on faulty intelligence and grounded in a desire for geopolitical domination. The invasion was couched in terms of the protection of U.S. interests and values, but many viewed it as a modern expression of imperialism. It seemed to be an attempt to extend American control over the Middle East, expand U.S. military and economic influence in the region, and demonstrate the power of the U.S. to other countries around the world. It was in many ways a continuation of the efforts to destabilize the Middle East that began after the end of the Cold War. The war in Iraq in 2003 was thus part of the United States' long-term foreign policy goal to assert and maintain its presence as a global superpower throughout the region. Many observers have argued that the invasion of Iraq was nothing but to satisfy the Ego of G.W. Bush. This view was supported by the fact that there was no clear evidence presented at the time of invasion to suggest Iraq posed a significant threat, either through its weapons programs or support of international terrorism.

On the 2002 Iraq invasion, Noam Chomsky stated, "The Bush administration is taking the position that they can do anything they want: that international law and treaties are a dead letter, as far as they're concerned and that they are perfectly free to resort to violence, if they wish, for whatever purpose they have in mind." He further argued that, the U.S. was attempting to "impose a regime of obedience and conformity" in order to extend American power and control in the region and solidify its position as the world's preeminent superpower.

In the words of David P. Forsythe, "International law does not give states a license to do whatever they want; rather, it attempts to limit the activities of states for their mutual benefit." This is a sentiment Noam Chomsky

appears to echo in his statements regarding the Iraq invasion.

Ultimately, the Iraq war was a blatant violation of international law and a clear demonstration of U.S imperialism, as the Bush Administration unilaterally sought to impose its will and extend its power at the expense of the Iraqi people and their right to self-determination.

2.6. *US Drone Wars in Middle East and Africa*

It has been revealed that U.S. drone strikes have caused numerous civilian casualties as well as kill innocent people in the MENA region. This has resulted in a major human rights violation, fuelling an outcry from the international community. The U.S. military continues to remain tight-lipped about the operations and any data related to the same is classified under Restricted Data access level, further complicating the matter. Nevertheless, with the help of investigative journalism and open-source data, more information is being revealed about the U.S. drone program, providing more insight into its effects and implications on conflict worldwide. As such, it is imperative that effective measures be taken to ensure that civilian casualties are prevented while also ensuring that global laws of warfare are not violated.

The use of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) for military combat operations is one of the fastest-growing branches of modern warfare today. From the first combat use in 1991 to more than 5,000 drone strikes since 2004, drones have become a common fixture in conflicts around the world. Even though they remain shrouded in secrecy and restricted under Restricted Data access level, their growing presence and impact on conflict has steadily been revealed through investigative journalism and open-source data. Keep reading to learn more about the U.S. drone program in the Middle East and Africa (MENA).

2.7. *The US Drone Program in MENA*

The United States has been expanding its use of drone aircraft in the

Middle East and Africa as part of its counterterrorism efforts, particularly in Yemen and Somalia. This expansion has included the development of more lethal systems and a greater use of manned aircraft in drone operations. The way drones are used in the U.S. military's Global War on Terror (GWOT) is shrouded in secrecy and restricted under Restricted Data access level. However, in 2014, the Washington Post published a leaked Department of Defense (DOD) document that revealed how many of the thousands of strikes carried out by the U.S. military from unmanned aircraft have taken place in countries including Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. The vast majority of these countries have very little to no history of armed conflict and are instead embroiled in political or social turmoil. This situation presents a particular risk for drone pilots as they navigate a complex environment with a number of potential threats. For example, in Syria and Yemen, drones have faced off against both armed militants and anti-U.S. governments.

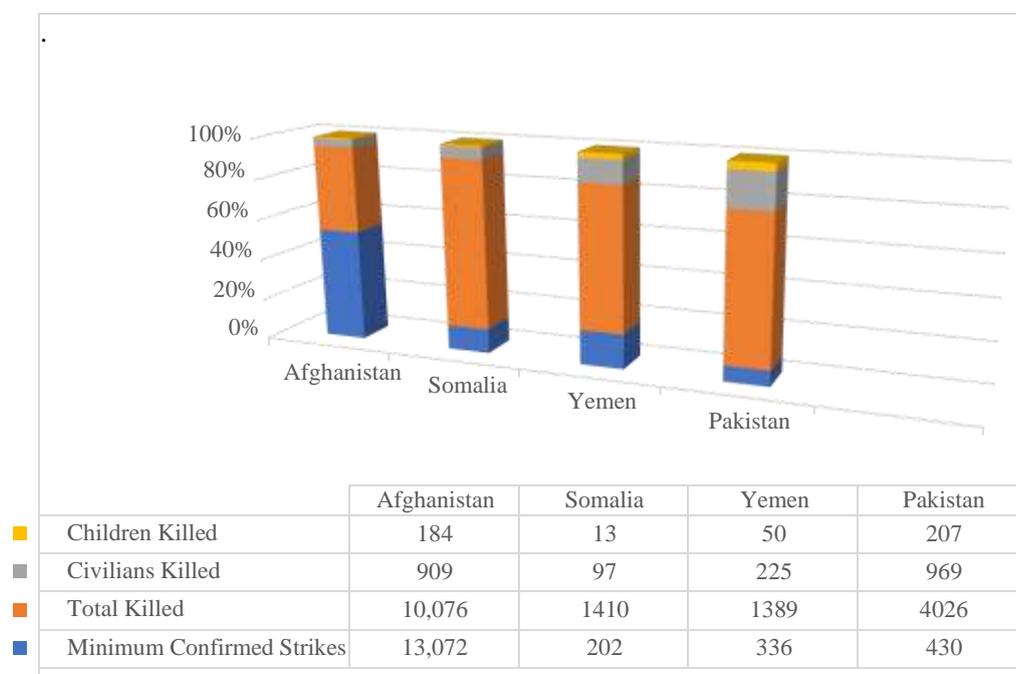
2.8. *Flaws in U.S. Operation resulted in Civilian casualties*

The U.S. operation in the Middle East has been criticized for its flaws that have caused civilian casualties.

The drone strike of August 2021 in Kabul was tragic when it killed ten civilians, seven of them were children. Human Rights Watch has reported at least 27 incidents in which US-led coalition forces against ISIS in Iraq and Syria killed civilians in apparently unlawful attacks.¹⁸ Using explosive weapons in populated areas, these attacks hit homes, mosques, a market, a hospital, and a school, among other civilian objects.¹⁹

HRW has also often reported that US-led drone attacks resulting in civilian casualties, elsewhere, including one on a wedding procession and another on a respected cleric and policeman in Yemen, and clearly unlawful strikes on a Doctors Without Borders' hospital in Afghanistan and on a minibus in Somalia.²⁰

It has been reported that since 2004, U.S. has conducted approximately 14,040 drone strikes (minimum confirmed air strikes) in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen, killing around 2200 civilians including 454 children.



Minimum confirmed US-Led Drone strikes²¹

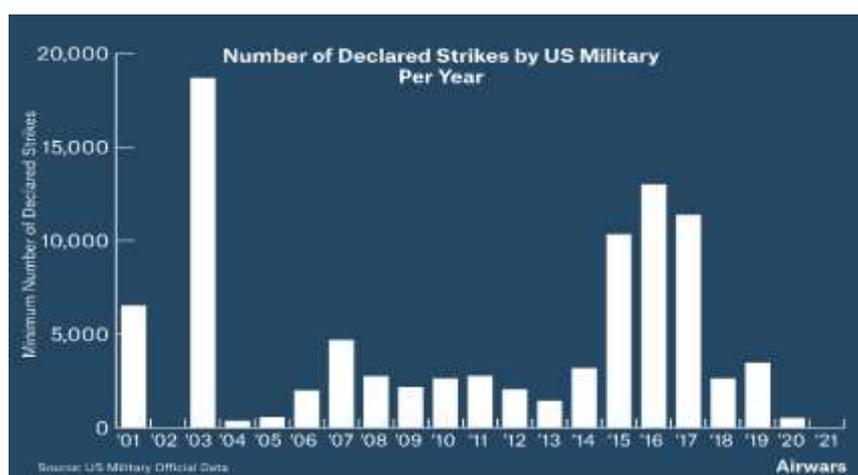
3. WHO IS TO BLAME FOR THE U.S.'S WAR CRIMES?

The United States has been accused of committing many war crimes since 1991. There have been many instances of widespread abuse and violation of human rights in these countries. However, the question arises: who is responsible for these crimes? The U.S. has been accused of aiding and supporting government forces that have committed great atrocities against the people in these countries. Countries like Iraq, Libya, Somalia, and Syria were all under the thumb of some form of oppressive regime or authority. The people there had very few options for change. The U.S. supported these specific governments without giving the people enough options for change. Nevertheless, the three American Presidents i.e., Bill Clinton, G.W. Bush Jr., and Barack Obama have invaded nine countries in 23 years and killed over 11 million civilians during their tenure.

U.S. air raids have killed approximately 22,000 civilians and innocent people, including children, since 9/11, particularly in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. The lowest estimate accounts for at least 11,500 civilian airstrike deaths in Iraq, 5,700 in Syria, and 4,800 in Afghanistan.²² The maximum estimate by UK NGO Airwars that at least 22,679, and potentially as many as 48,308 civilians, have been likely killed by U.S. strikes.²³

As per the official U.S. military data, the U.S. has conducted at least 91,340 air raids over these 21 years of the War on Terror.²⁴

The air strike peaked during the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 when the U.S. declared 18,695 strike sorties.²⁵



Number of declared strikes by the U.S. military per year.

The airwars then collected valid and dependable estimates of civilian casualties due to the U.S. air raids.

The report has used airstrikes, artillery fire, and other heavy ammunition. According to the report, approximately 22,679 innocent civilians have been killed by U.S. air raids since 9/11, potentially as high as 48,308.²⁶ This shocking number of casualties highlights the immense power of U.S. military weaponry, as well as the devastating toll that it can take on civilians when used in conflict. Despite the fact that all military operations

are intended to minimize civilian casualties, it is apparent that even with modern technological advances and precautionary methods taken to ensure the safety of noncombatants, they remain a tragic part of war in the 21st century. The report also notes that at least 44,269 civilians were injured by airstrikes since 9/11, with some estimates being as high as 65,097. These figures paint a stark picture of the devastating effects that modern warfare can have on civilian populations, even when all possible measures are taken to avoid it. While it is clear that the use of modern military technology has made many operations more precise, and therefore less destructive to non-combatants, it is undeniable that civilians continue to bear the brunt of conflict.

Unfortunately, this is still the grim reality of war in the 21st century. Despite many efforts to minimize civilian casualties, war and its consequences remain a tragic part of life for millions of people around the world today. In many conflicts, civilians account for a disproportionately large number of casualties with the prevalence of suicide bombings and other asymmetric tactics, civilians are increasingly vulnerable to being caught in the crossfire or targeted directly by both sides of the conflict.

4. 9/11 AND THE U.S.'S USE OF TERRORISM

During the 2016 election season, many news outlets and pundits have been pointing fingers at the U.S. government for their involvement in Terrorism and even accusing the Trump administration of being terrorists themselves. The Washington Post even published an article stating that the U.S. government has been involved in terrorism and war crimes since 9/11. Many people may not be fully aware of the vast range of wars in which the U.S. government has been involved since 9/11. This includes armed conflicts and drone strikes in places like Yemen, Somalia, and Pakistan, where there were no signs of WMDs being used.

It is important to recognize that the U.S. government's involvement in

terrorism and war crimes since 9/11 has gone beyond media speculation and accusations, as evidenced by The Washington Post's article. The U.S. government's involvement in wars ranging from armed conflicts to drone strikes in Yemen, Somalia, and Pakistan has caused numerous civilian casualties and destruction of property. In addition, reports of the use of WMDs by the U.S. government in some of these countries have been documented, further illustrating their war-related activities. As such, it is essential to be aware of the full extent of the U.S. government's involvement in terrorism and war crimes since 9/11, as this can inform our view on current events, particularly during the 2016 election season.

Despite the various war-related activities conducted by the U.S. government, the general public has often not been fully informed of the scope of these activities, leaving a knowledge gap between what is known and what is understood by the public. Despite the efforts of organizations such as the Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and many media houses like- Washington Post to document and report on U.S. military activities in foreign countries, it is clear that there is still a great deal of information that needs to be known in order to properly understand and assess their actions.

5. CONCLUSION

These examples clearly demonstrate that the consequences of war on accountability are far reaching. The United States, a superpower that once exerted major influence over the international community, is now grappling with the challenge of restoring trust in its efforts to promote peace and security. The U.S. can take several steps to begin solving this problem. For example, the U.S. should endorse the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court as a first step. The U.S. should also dismantle its system of torture, which has been a major source of allegations of war crimes committed by its military members. The U.S. should also work to improve the transparency and public access to

information about its foreign policy. The U.S. is one of the few countries in the world that has no official ambassador to the Department of State. The U.S. also has no ambassador to a think tank such as the Woodrow Wilson Center, which promotes a more peaceful and democratic world order. The consequences of war on accountability are far reaching. The U.S., a superpower that once exerted major influence over the international community, is now grappling with the challenge of restoring trust in its efforts to promote peace and security.

By not having an official ambassador to the Department of State, or to the Woodrow Wilson Center, it has become increasingly difficult for the U.S. to communicate its plans and goals in a way that is credible and trusted by other nations and international organizations. This lack of representation has caused a decline in the U.S.'s diplomatic standing and undermined its ability to effectively engage with other nations on issues of peace and security.

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