



International
Development

Civil Society and Human Security Research Unit public lecture

The Deaths of Others

John Tirman

Executive Director, Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Professor Mary Kaldor

Chair, LSE

LSE events

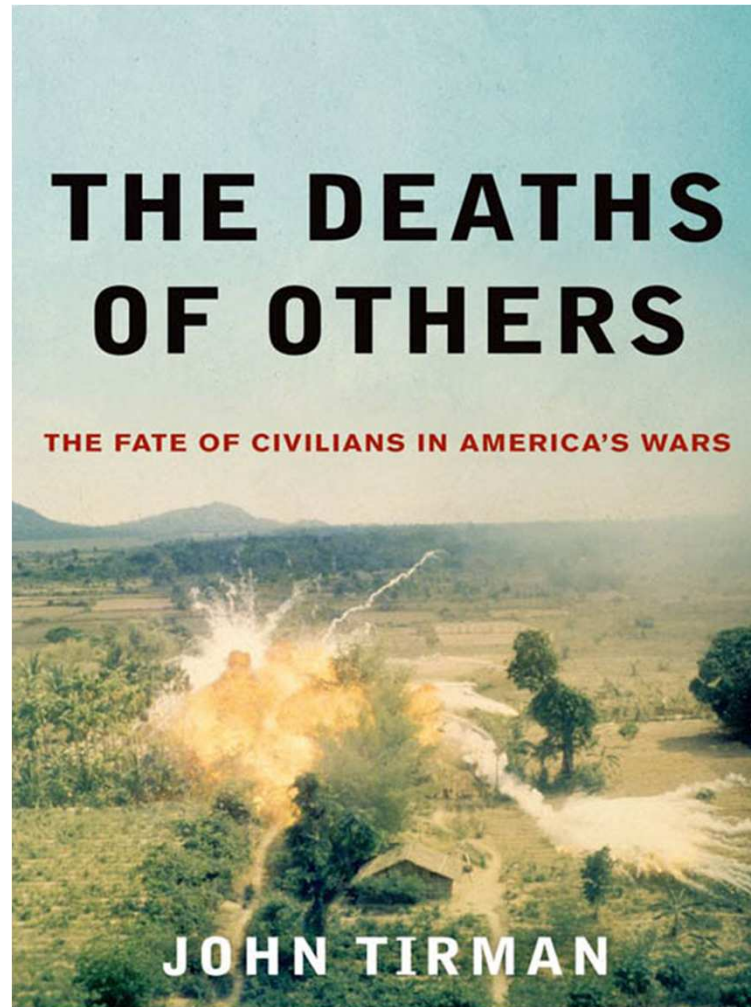
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THE DEATHS OF OTHERS

THE FATE OF CIVILIANS IN AMERICA'S WARS

JOHN TIRMAN



THE DEATHS OF OTHERS: THE FATE OF CIVILIANS IN AMERICA'S WARS

“War is hell”

In the three major U.S. wars since 1945, 6-8 million people died.

Three million in Korea.

Two to four million in Vietnam.

As many as one million in Iraq.

THE DEATHS OF OTHERS: THE FATE OF CIVILIANS IN AMERICA'S WARS

- Why?
- How?
- What are the consequences?



THE DEATHS OF OTHERS: THE FATE OF CIVILIANS IN AMERICA'S WARS



3 PROPOSITIONS:

First,

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Second,

These large numbers of casualties have consequences for the war, for America's reputation, and for the populations at risk.

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Many civilians in these wars die as a result of U.S. war policies and practices.

Second,

These large numbers of casualties have consequences for the war, for America's reputation, and for the populations at risk.

Third,

The American public is essentially indifferent to these casualties, which also has consequences.

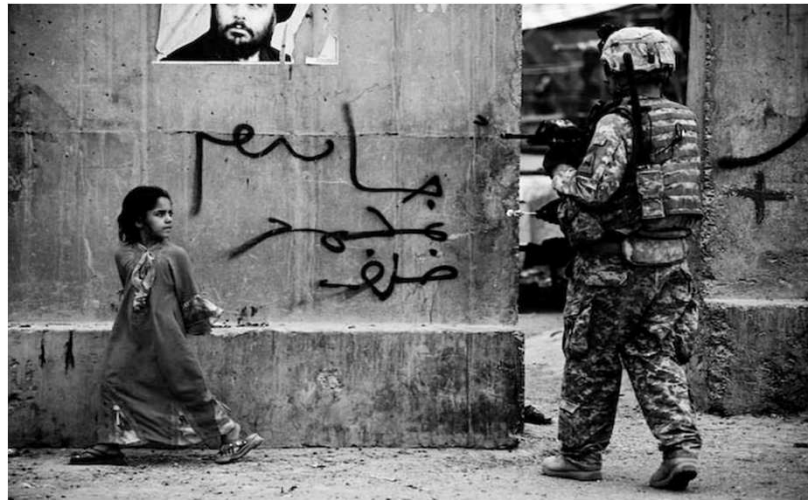
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How does that happen?

- House and village searches, patrols
- Roadblocks
- Convoys
- Artillery – “harassment and interdiction” fire
- Airstrikes
- Force protection – retaliation



Attitudes

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- More than a third said torture of civilians was permissible to get information, and 17 percent viewed all civilians as insurgents.
- A survey of officer candidates in 1967 found half willing to use torture to get information; 15 percent did not understand the rules of war.

Practices

- Strategic bombing in Korea
- Bombing, forced resettlement, search-and-destroy in South Vietnam and Cambodia
- House-to-house, etc., in Iraq; too few troops; failure to provide security during civil war



Outcomes

- 3 million dead in Korean War (1950-53), between one and 1.5 million civilians
- 2 to 4 million dead in Vietnam, about half civilians, and 5 million displaced; 750,000 dead in Cambodia
- Iraq: 500,000 “excess” deaths in sanctions period; 700,000 or more in 2003 war. 5 million displaced.

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Consequences of the human costs of war

- High mortality affects management of conflict

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 - Causes of mortality, and reaction

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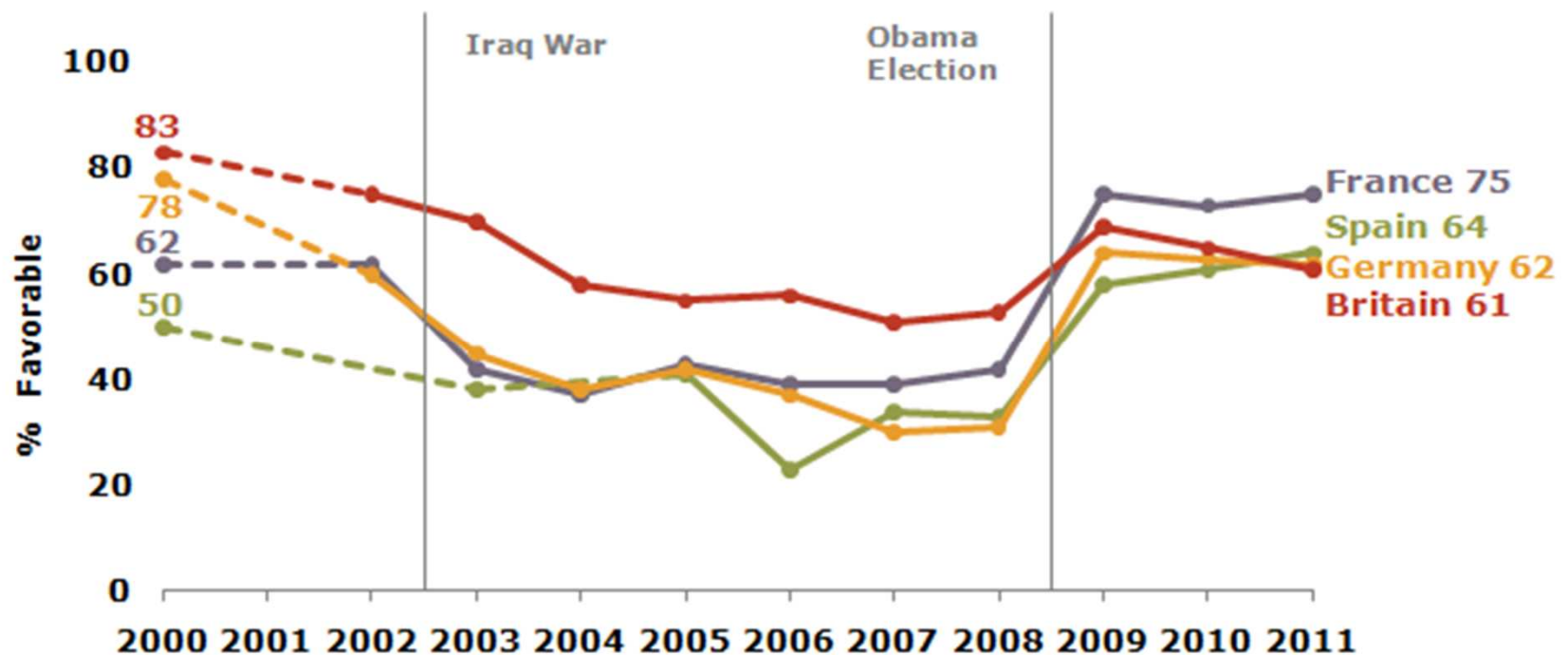
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Widespread anti-Americanism remained a key feature of international public opinion throughout the Bush years:

U.S. Image in Western Europe



PEW RESEARCH CENTER.

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- High mortality affects war societies

3

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Measuring indifference

- Public opinion surveys
- Cultural representations
- Expressions of political and military leaders



Explanations for indifference

- Frontier myth
- Racism
- Just World Theory



Consequences of indifference

- Reputational costs for the U.S.
- Instability in affected regions
- Permission for future war-making



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