



PEOPLE ON WAR

ICRC consultation on the rules of war
2007 Country report: Great Britain



ICRC

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2. Background

2007 marks the 30th anniversary of Additional Protocols I and II to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. The Conventions established the legal safeguards covering the way wars may be fought, in order to ensure better protection of civilians, prisoners and the wounded in war. They have since been ratified by all states, and now enjoy universal acceptance.

The 1977 Additional Protocols supplement the 1949 Conventions by further improving the laws protecting civilians and the wounded, with particular emphasis on the duty to distinguish between civilians and combatants, and ensure that civilians are not targeted. The Protocols were adopted as a response to the changing nature of warfare and weapons technology, and – for the first time – laid down detailed humanitarian rules that apply in civil wars.

To mark the 30th anniversary of the Additional Protocols, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), in partnership with the British Red Cross, commissioned ICM Research to repeat the 1999 People on War survey in the United Kingdom. The 1999 People on War survey had originally been conducted in 17 countries around the world to examine attitudes to conflict and international humanitarian law, fifty years after the signing of the Geneva Conventions.

Key questions from the 1999 survey are replicated in order to permit detailed insight on continuities and changes in attitudes to conflict in the intervening years among the British general public.

The fieldwork was carried out from 10 - 22 August 2007 and was a nationally representative survey of 1,000 adults aged over 18 years. Interviews were carried out with persons across the country and the results have been weighted to the known profile of all British adults. Interestingly for a survey covering issues related to war, of those surveyed, 13% reported that they had served in the military.



The International Committee of the Red Cross is a Swiss-based humanitarian organisation, which works in over 80 countries around the world to protect and assist the victims of armed conflict. The ICRC, as named in the 1949 Geneva Conventions, has a permanent mandate under international law to take impartial action for prisoners, the wounded and sick, and civilians affected by conflict. The ICRC is at the origin of the International Red Cross / Red Crescent movement.



ICM Research is a full service market research company, based in London. The company was formed in 1989 out of Marplan, and having grown year-on-year, would now rank as the eighth biggest market research company in the UK.

ICM has a reputation for high profile opinion research, much of which is conducted on behalf of major media organisations such as the BBC and The Guardian, or central government departments, executive agencies or political parties. To common acknowledgement, ICM has consistently been the most accurate opinion pollster in UK elections since 1997.

The opinions expressed in this report are not those of the ICRC. The ICRC commissioned ICM to replicate the 1999 survey (undertaken by Greenburg Inc). ICM compiled and analysed the results and is responsible for content and interpretation in this report. The questionnaire was devised in 1999 by Greenburg Inc. in consultation with the ICRC.

3. Foreword by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

To commemorate the 30th anniversary of Additional Protocols I and II to the Geneva Conventions the ICRC commissioned research in 2007 to examine attitudes of the British public in regard to war time conduct. The results of this research can be compared to the outcome of similar research carried out in 1999 when the same questions were asked in the original "People on War" survey carried out in 17 countries, including the UK.

In 2007, the ICRC chose to focus exclusively on the UK as a means to initiate debate on important issues at a time when the relevance of international humanitarian law has been questioned, and because of the widespread media interest in the presence of UK armed forces in conflicts such as those currently being waged in Afghanistan and Iraq. The UK has global interests and responsibilities. The UK is an important country for the ICRC because of its role as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, of the EU, G8, Commonwealth and NATO. The British Government has a longstanding relationship with the ICRC and is an important donor. The British Red Cross is also a strong supporter of the ICRC contributing to its work in many countries throughout the world and plays an active role in international humanitarian law issues.

This research was carried out at a time when public awareness on issues linked to wartime is likely to be at an all time high because of the direct participation of UK forces in high profile conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and the media coverage of ongoing conflicts such as in Sudan (Darfur), and in Israel and the Autonomous & Occupied Territories. In addition, international terrorism is an issue of global prominence since the attacks in the US on September 11th 2001 and in London in July 2005 and other places such as Bali, Spain and Egypt to name but a few.

For the ICRC, the importance of understanding perceptions and attitudes in relation to issues such as whether certain atrocities are inevitable or preventable in wartime, or whether prisoners of war should be tortured, is vital. Vital because the ICRC - in its endeavour to protect and assist persons affected by armed conflict throughout the world and to ensure respect for international humanitarian law - must understand such attitudes in order to try to influence them. The general public can have an influence on public policy and the ICRC felt keenly the importance of letting the voices of the British public be heard.

Additional analysis needs to be carried out in the coming months, although some key trends can already be noted. Further to more in-depth analysis the ICRC will implement a strategy to try to influence attitudes in favour of stronger protection for persons who take no active part in armed conflict or who are no longer part of the conflict because they are imprisoned, sick or wounded. This protection stems from international humanitarian law – of which the Additional Protocols are part – and of which there is universal recognition of the importance and applicability of this body of law.

What we can already say about the research is that there are some significant changes in attitudes in Britain since 1999. The ICRC notes the following important findings:

- Awareness of the Geneva Conventions has risen in the UK over the last eight years from a consensual 86% in 1999 to near unanimity (92%) now.
- Understanding of the obligations to prisoners of war remains reassuringly high in Britain. Around four in five believe that PoWs should not be subjected to torture even if it is to obtain important military information, and support the principle that the authorities should allow prisoner visits from an independent organisation. Article 126 of the Third Geneva Convention specifically recognises the right of the ICRC to visit PoWs.
- In 1999, a sizeable majority (72%) believed that military engagement should be limited to targeting combatants only, with civilians completely left alone. Now in 2007, a bare majority (51%) subscribes to this view. What is worrying for the ICRC is that of persons surveyed, those who have been in the military – the group whose understanding of the legal obligations and conduct expected of them in situations of armed conflict should be

highest - only 34% say this, compared to a statistically significantly higher level (54%) among those who have never served in the military.

- Focussing again on military respondents, those that have seen military action are statistically significantly more likely to consider atrocities taking place in wars to be inevitable (70%) than those who have never served in the military (47% saying inevitable).
- When specific tactics or scenarios impacting on civilians are presented to respondents as wrong or part of war as a means to weaken the enemy, there is strong support for the protection of civilians. This is particularly the case with civilians being deprived of medicine, food and water, with three-quarters (76%) now saying it is wrong compared to 58% in 1999. Furthermore, a consensus (85%) now says that taking civilian hostages is wrong, compared to 76% who said so in 1999.
- The British public has strong views in relation to the types of weapons which should not be used in warfare, the vast majority believing that chemical/biological (84%) and nuclear weapons (80%), napalm (74%), blinding laser weapons (74%) should never be used. Importantly, 69% of the public believe that cluster bombs - weapons whose current use is much discussed and the subject of several campaigns to limit or ban them - should never be used.

A continued need to increase awareness and educate on the impact of war on protected populations is essential. Where research indicates a gradual increase in tolerance and/or acceptance with regard to violations and atrocities of IHL, organisations such as the ICRC need to draw attention to such trends and attempt to reverse them. Much of IHL was conceived out of shock and revulsion at the type and scale of atrocities committed in previous wars. The needs for these rules protecting persons such as civilians and prisoners of war cannot be taken for granted. Indeed, these 2007 results show that when the British public is asked about very specific types of violations, there is a high level of recognition that they are wrong or unacceptable. It is in relation to more generic questions – such as whether atrocities can be prevented or confidence in the effectiveness of the Geneva Conventions that attitudes are less clear cut.

The ICRC hopes that this research will inspire debate on the humanitarian aspects of war and particularly a focus on the men, women and children who become the victims of such wars. It is hoped that such debate will lead to an increased recognition of the importance and relevance of IHL today and a recognition of the responsibility of all actors to make this law known and respected. Recognising that there are limits in wartime – boundaries that cannot be crossed – and that political authorities and armed forces have an obligation to ensure that these limits are respected is essential.

4. Executive Summary

- Since 1999, there has been a statistically significant 21-point erosion of support for the basic position that civilians should be afforded protection from attack in wartime. A sizable majority (72%) believed in 1999 that military engagement should be limited to targeting combatants only, with civilians completely left alone. Now in 2007, a bare majority (51%) subscribes to this view.
- In 2007, only 47% of all persons surveyed believe that atrocities can be prevented, (51% in 1999). This is worrying when you consider that 2007 has seen widespread worldwide media reporting of atrocities in wars around the world.
- Reassuringly, the results are different when specific tactics or scenarios impacting on civilians are presented to respondents as wrong or part of war as a means to weaken the enemy. In three of the four scenarios the British public are now more inclined to say that they are wrong, than they were in 1999:
 - This is particularly the case with civilians being deprived of medicine, food and water, with three-quarters (76%) now saying it is wrong compared to 58% then.
 - A consensus (85%) now says that taking civilian hostages is wrong, compared to 76% who said so in 1999.
 - In relation to whether it is acceptable or unacceptable to attack civilians in circumstances where they provide food and shelter to enemy combatants – either voluntarily or by force, 76%, (1999: 74%) still believe it “not acceptable” for the other side to attack those civilians, while one in six (16%) believe that it is OK, where the provision of such help is voluntary. Where the provision of help is forced, even more (81%, 1999: 81%) believe it is not acceptable to attack. Where the specific circumstances of military action against civilian targets are specified, there appears to be a strong level of rejection against the use of that strategy.
- The British public has strong views in relation to the types of weapons which should not be used in warfare, the vast majority believing that chemical/biological (84%) and nuclear weapons (80%), napalm (74%), blinding laser weapons (74%) should never be used. Rejection of cluster bombs likewise is high: 69% believe that they should never be used.
- Ten years after the Ottawa treaty banning the proliferation, use and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines, there is still strong objection to their use, with three-quarters (73%) believing their use unacceptable in modern warfare.
- Understanding of the obligations to prisoners of war remains high in Britain. Around four in five believe that PoWs should not be subjected to torture even if it is to obtain important military information, and that the authorities should allow prisoners to be visited by an independent organisation.
- Asking people how they themselves would respond to certain scenarios if they were in a war-time situation shows that a majority - six in ten (59%, up from 52% in 1999) - would save the life of a surrendering enemy combatant, even if he had killed a person close to them. One in three (30%, 1999: 33%) would not save them. Fewer people would save the life of a wounded enemy combatant in these circumstances (49%, 1999: 43%) while almost as many would do nothing to help (41%, 1999: 39%). Failing to help the wounded is not, however, the same as actually condoning the death of enemy combatants, and overwhelmingly and encouragingly nine in ten (93%, 1999: 93%) say they would not approve of killing of enemy prisoners, even if the other side was doing so. Only one in twenty (6%) feel they could approve the killing, (4% in 1999).

- Awareness of the Geneva Conventions has risen in the UK over the last eight years from a consensual 86% in 1999 to near unanimity (92%) now. Experience in the military (100%) is clearly a factor in relation to awareness.
- However, awareness does not necessarily mean confidence in the ability of the Geneva Conventions to have an impact in practice. In 1999, nearly four in ten (38%) believed the Conventions to have the ability to prevent wars from getting worse, but now the proportion has dropped by a statistically significant 8-points to 30%. Accordingly, the proportion who thinks the Conventions make no real difference has risen from 55% to 64%.
- Reassuringly a large majority (84%) believe that the laws regulating the conduct of war are important enough for violators of these laws to be brought to justice (in 1999 81%).
- When it comes to role of Britain in wars abroad, 82% "strongly" or "somewhat" agree that the role is to limit casualties of conflict by sending in troops in a peacekeeping role; with 77% strongly or somewhat agreeing that the UK should provide humanitarian assistance to aid victims but not to send troops.
- The majority of the British public (88%) believe that increasing the accuracy of weapons is clearly a way to reduce the victims of war. The second priority (80%) is to increase the effectiveness of laws to limit what combatants can do in war. The other two means suggested to reduce the number of victims were: increasing news coverage of wars in order to expose atrocities (75%) and decreasing the number of weapons available to soldiers and fighters (65%).

5. Main report – Background to Wars

5.1 Attitudes toward wars abroad

At a time when the British military is engaged in two very high profile conflicts – Afghanistan and Iraq – unsurprisingly public interest in wars abroad remains relatively high. In 1999, the consultation was carried out against a backdrop of air strikes being carried out by NATO in what was then Yugoslavia. In 2007, two in three people (62% vs. 1999: 64%) said they are interested in wars abroad. Responses are similar even if the UK is not involved in the war (61% vs. 1999: 65%).

The British believe themselves to be impartial on foreign wars, with only 25% saying they take sides, similar to the 24% that said so in 1999, with men (34%) twice as likely as women to do so (18%). Women are (currently) more likely not to take sides than men (78% vs 62%), as are those who are not interested in war reports – 85% of these people won't take sides compared to 64% of those who are generally interested.

Figure 1: Taking sides in war

When you see media stories on war abroad (B: not involving the UK), do you generally find yourself favouring one of the sides, or generally do you not take sides	1999	2007
Take sides	24%	25%
Will not take sides	72%	70%
Take sides (war not including UK)	23%	21%
Will not take sides (war not including UK)	71%	74%

When it comes to favouring one side or another in wars, respondents still appear more inclined to focus on causes than battlefield behaviour. Half (48%) now consider 'what each side is fighting for' to be the primary factor in determining the direction of their support, which represents a 5-point rise on the 1999 finding. However, it is also the case that more (31% vs. 1999: 26%) also consider the behaviour of sides involved in the conflict. These increases - not statistically significant in either case – have come at the expense of people who previously said they consider both aspects (12% vs 1999: 21%) when deciding who to favour.

In response to a question on world events in general, three quarters (72%) of the British public now respond that they consider things to be going in the wrong direction, significantly more than did so in 1999 (55%).

In 2007, there is a clear generational factor involved, with the elderly most likely to see change negatively. As Figure 2 demonstrates, 81% of those aged 55-64 and 78% of those 65+ think things are going in the wrong direction - significantly more than the majorities in the younger age groups. However, as this was the first question asked in the survey, attitudes could be shaped by non-war factors just as much as by war-related factors.

Figure 2. World events going in the right or wrong direction

First, when you think about what is going on in the world today, are things mainly going in the right direction or mainly going in the wrong direction?	% saying 'wrong direction'
18-24	60%
25-34	71%
35-44	72%
45-54	64%
55-64	81%
65+	78%
Overall	72%

5.2 Avoiding war and atrocities

The 1999 survey established that the British decisively agreed that wars abroad can be avoided. This perception has been built on during the intervening years, with seven in ten (70%) members of the British public now believing it. This represents a statistically insignificant 5-percentage point rise (1999: 65%). One in four (24%), however, still maintain that wars are effectively unavoidable, down 2-points from the 26% that believed so in 1999.

Women (74%) are more optimistic than men (66%) that wars are avoidable. Interestingly, those who have participated in combat are much less likely (50%) to believe a non-military solution is possible compared to those who have no military background (71%).

Logically, those who think that the world is going in the wrong direction are more likely to think that wars are avoidable (73%) than those who think it is going in the right direction (62%). Clearly – for many of the former group the fact that that wars still occur underpins their insight on the direction of world events.

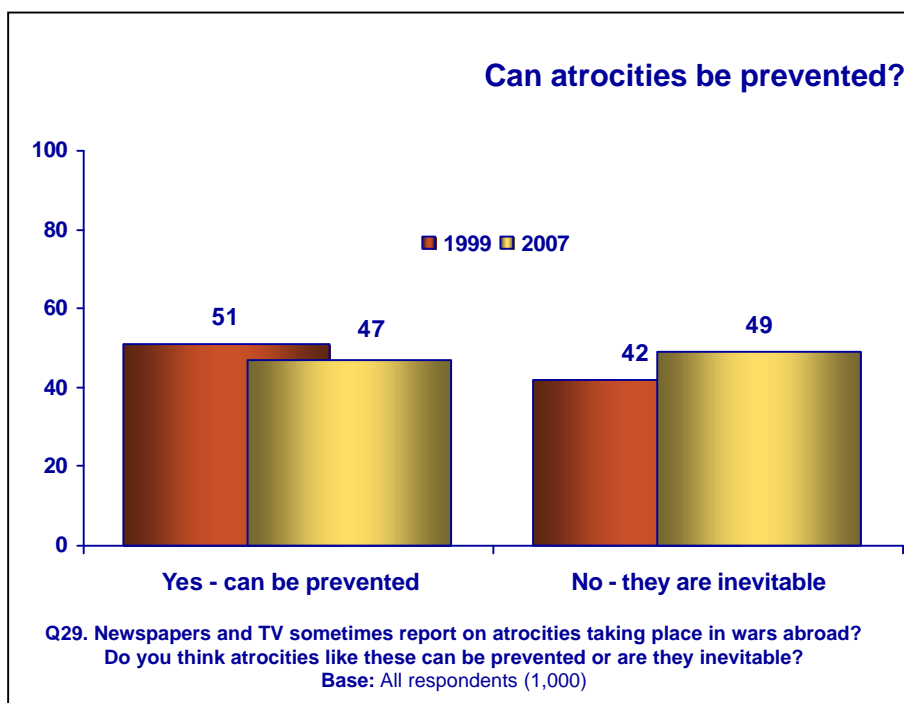
Opinion remains fragmented on why wars still happen, but similarly to 1999, more people are inclined to blame a failure of governments than a failure of human nature, as Figure 3 suggests.

Figure 3. Why do wars happen?

Why do you think these wars abroad continue to happen? Because of.....	1999	2007
A failure of human nature	30%	35%
A failure of governments	36%	42%
Both	32%	21%

Focus on the occurrence of wartime atrocities rather than wars in their entirety produce a rather more pessimistic set of views. The British public is currently split down the middle on the inevitability of such atrocities, with slightly more (49%) now believing them to be inevitable rather than preventable (47%). As Figure 4 below demonstrates, this is a switch-around in ordering compared to 1999, when more people – by a narrow majority - felt that atrocities could be prevented (51%).

Figure 4. Newspapers and TV sometimes report on atrocities taking place in wars abroad. Do you think that atrocities like these can be prevented or are they inevitable?



Those most inclined to maintain that atrocities are inevitable most notably include men (54%) and the over 65's (56%). Two other important sub-divisions also emerge: firstly, respondents that have seen military action are statistically significantly more likely to consider atrocities to be inevitable (70%) than those who have never served in the military (47% saying inevitable), secondly, six in ten (59%) of those who think that world events are going in the right direction consider atrocities to be inevitable, compared to only 48% of those who think events are on the wrong track.

6. Combatants and civilians

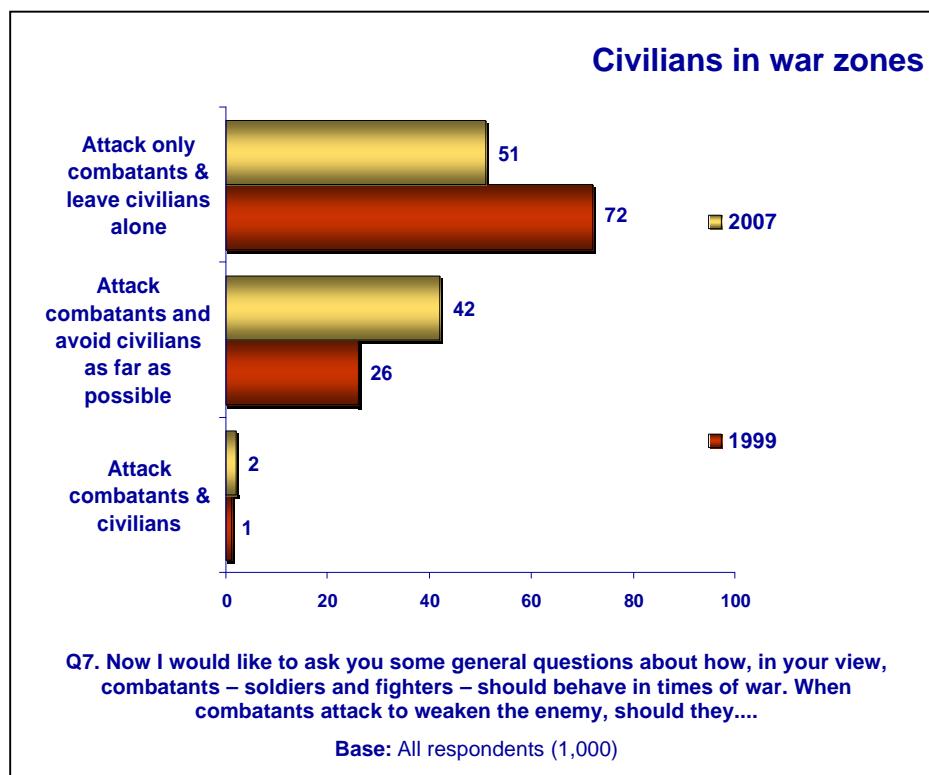
Much of preceding data analysis has indicated that the British public have not really changed their minds fundamentally over matters of war, (although the same cannot be said as far as their interpretation of world events is concerned). At this point, however, we identify a major – and troubling - shift in attitudes to war itself.

6.1 Who to attack?

In 1999, a sizeable majority (72%) believed that military engagement should be limited to targeting combatants only, with civilians completely left alone. Now, a bare majority (51%) subscribes to this view. This represents a statistically significant 21-point erosion of support for this basic position that civilians should be afforded protection from attack in wartime.

As Figure 5 establishes, four in ten (42%) now adopt a “best effort distinction” - where combatants attack each other and leave civilians alone “as far as possible”. Hardly anybody thinks – then or now – that civilians are as legitimate targets as the military (2007: 2%, 1999: 1%).

Figure 5. When combatants attack to weaken the enemy, should they....



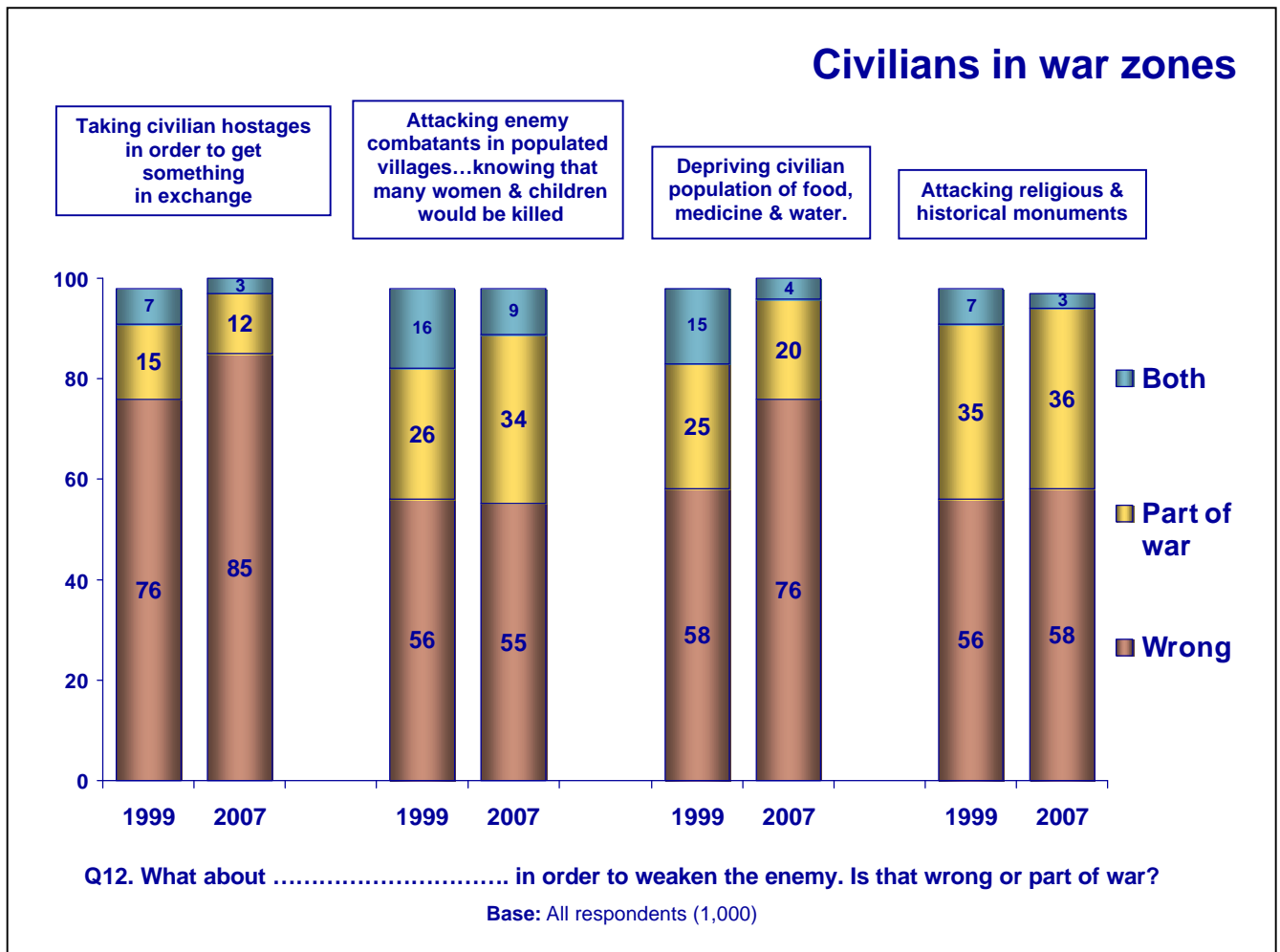
A wafer thin majority of 51% still supports the strongest level of civilian protection: that in combat, civilians should be left alone. The proportion rises to 55% among women (47% men), and a clear correlation is observed between age and full protection, with the youngest respondents (63% 18-24 vs 40% 65+) statistically significantly more likely to support this concept than their more elderly counterparts. It is also the case that those from an Asian or Asian British ethnic background are statistically significantly more likely (76%) to think that civilians are off limits. Military service again provides a major variation in response, with only 33% who have been in the military saying this, compared to a statistically significantly higher level (54%) among those who have never served in the military.

However, it is clear the picture is different when specific scenarios impacting on civilians are presented to respondents as a means to weaken the enemy. They were asked whether or not

certain scenarios were wrong or part of war. Given the evidence above, it could be expected that more people would now accept such scenarios as acceptable tactics. But that is not the case. Indeed, in three of the four scenarios the British public are more inclined now to say that they are wrong, than they were in 1999. This is particularly the case with civilians being deprived of medicine, food and water, with three-quarters (76%) now saying it is wrong compared to 58% then – a statistically significant 18-point movement. Furthermore, a consensus (85%) now says that taking civilian hostages is wrong, compared to 76% who said so in 1999 – this leap of 9-points is also statistically significant.

It would seem to imply that the British public is more inclined to accept the fact that civilians are possible targets in war zones in the achievement of military objectives, but less inclined to accept specific tactics against them. The fact that only 2% (1% in 1999) of those surveyed believe that both combatants and civilians can be attacked in equal measure indicates that there is still support for the need to differentiate between them. An increase in those believing that civilians should be avoided "as far as possible" when attacking combatants (2007:42%, 1999: 26%) may highlight the dilemma for respondents, i.e. knowledge of the basic principles of distinction between combatants and civilians, and the need to protect civilians in war, versus the difficulty of implementing such principles in reality, particularly where recent wars have shown combat being waged amidst civilian populations.

Figure 6. What aboutin order to weaken the enemy. Is that wrong or part of war?



One further question concerned whether it is acceptable or unacceptable to attack civilians in circumstances where they provide food and shelter to enemy combatants – either voluntarily or by force. In cases where the provision of such help is voluntary, three-quarters (76%, 1999: 74%) still believe it not acceptable for the other side to attack those civilians, while one in six

(16%, 1999:18%) believe that it is acceptable. Where the provision of help is forced, even more (81%, 1999: 81%) believe it is not acceptable to attack, with 12% (1999:13%) still believing it acceptable. Once again, where the specific circumstances of military action against civilian targets are specified, there appears to be a strong level of rejection against the use of that strategy.

6.2 Reasons why people reject action against civilians

There can be little doubt that military action that treats civilians as legitimate targets is rejected by the British on moral and legal grounds. Four in five (84%) state that it is against their personal code, while a similar number (81%) also suggest that it is against human rights. Six in ten (60%) think that it is “against what most people here believe” and half (52%) say it is against our culture.

Figure 7.

You say some things are wrong in times of war. Do you think they are wrong primarily because.... Base: All finding any aspect wrong (969)	%
Against your personal code	84%
Against human rights	81%
Against what most people here believe	60%
Against your culture	52%
Against the law	37%
Against your religion	34%

7. Weapons

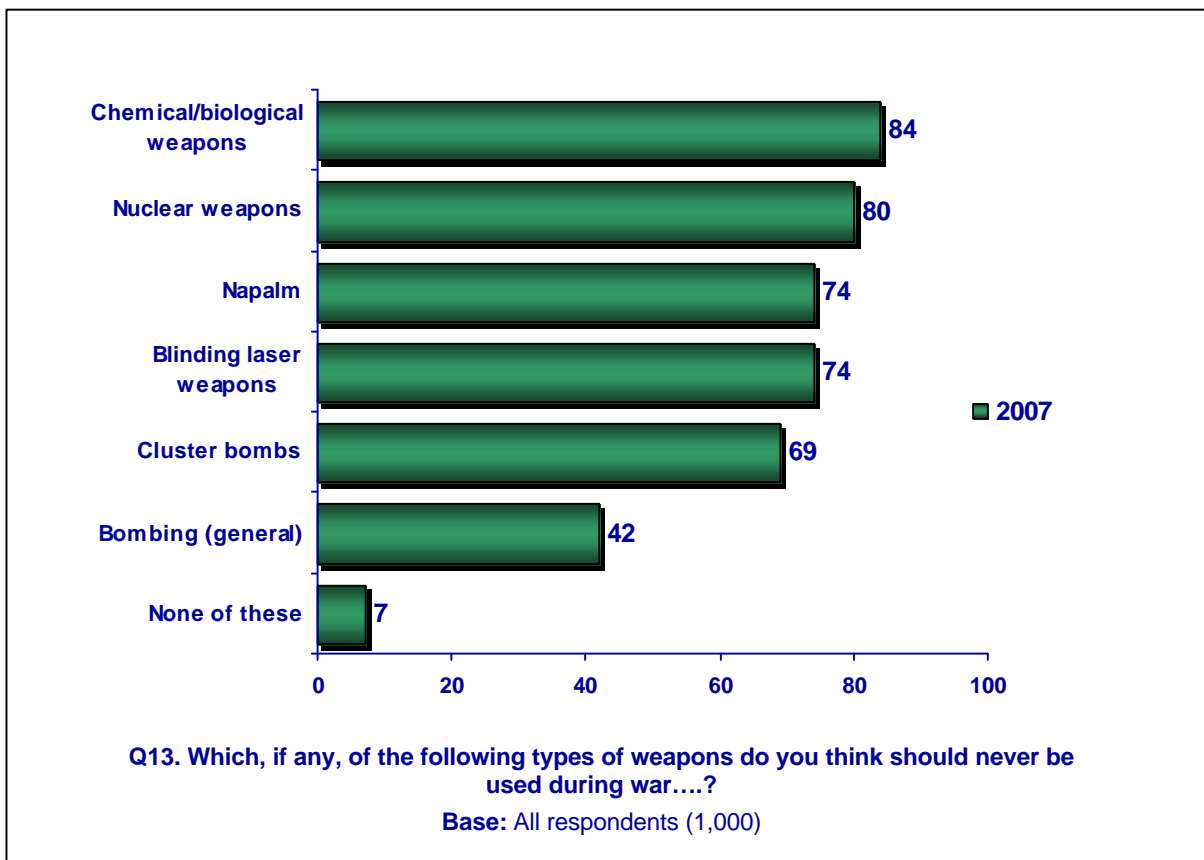
Respondents were asked to choose from a list which types of weapons should NEVER be used in warfare. Perhaps not surprisingly, chemical/biological and nuclear weapons are completely off limits as far as most people are concerned, with chemical and biological weapons (84%) topping the list just ahead of nuclear (80%).

Solid rejection of other weapons is also evident. Napalm and blinding laser weapons have different associations, but in both instances, three-quarters of people (74%) believe neither should be used in modern warfare. Cluster bombs (69%) also fall into this category. There is also a recognition that some kinds of weapon will inevitably be used, the most acceptable of which appears to be 'general bombing' – with 42% rejecting this form of warfare.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the 1997 Ottawa treaty banning the proliferation, use and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines, which was ratified in 1997 following a high-profile campaign. A decade on, and there is still strong objection to their use, with three-quarters (73%) believing their planting to be unacceptable in modern warfare. Women (81%) are statistically significantly more likely than men (63%) to object to their use but no other important distinctions emerge.

Despite the high level of objection toward the planting of landmines in 2007, however, it is important to note that more people (80%) objected to their use in 1999. The fall of 7-points is, statistically significant, but could be partly explained in terms of heightened awareness of the issue in 1999 in the wake of the media attention given to the anti-landmine campaign and signing of the Ottawa Treaty.

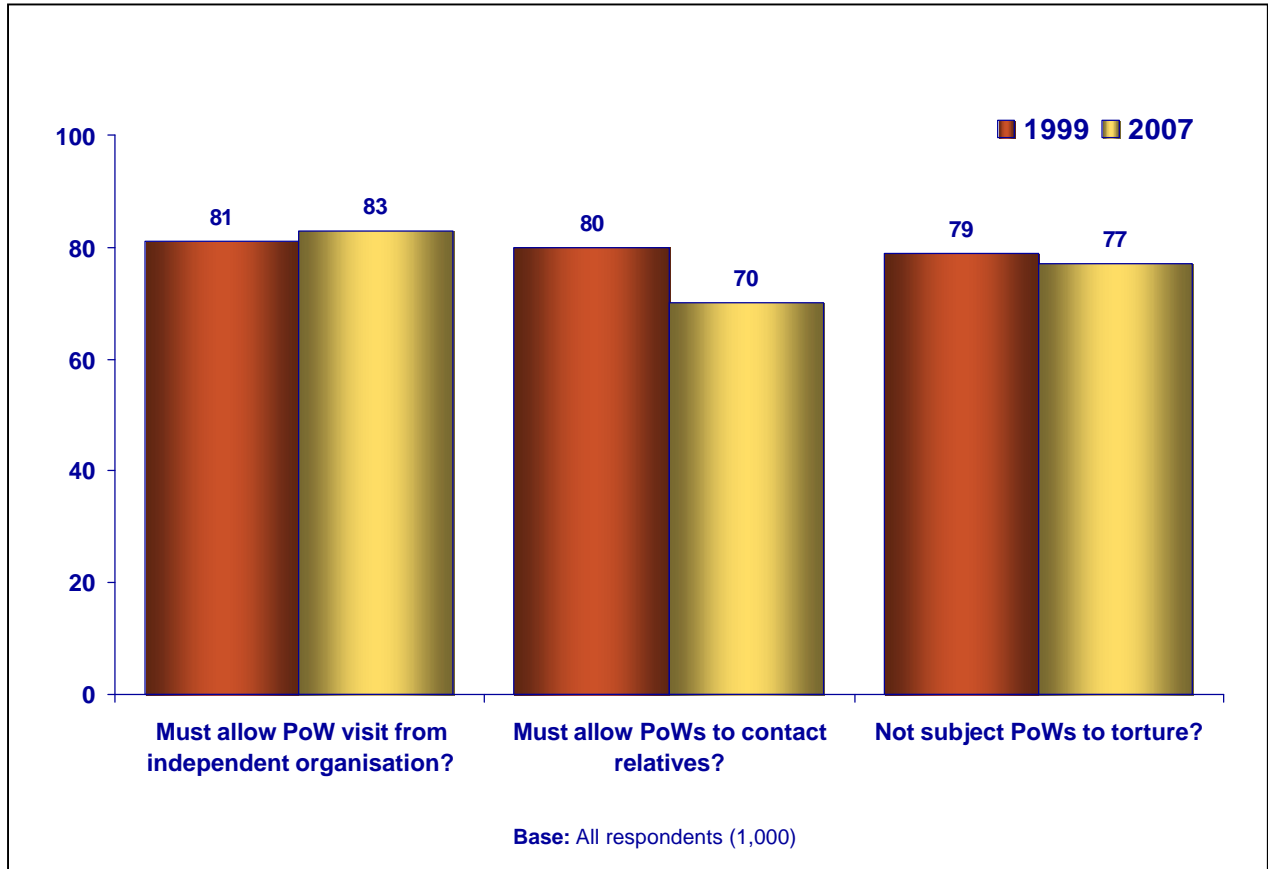
Figure 8. Weapons that should never be used.



8. Prisoners of war

Understanding of the obligations to prisoners of war remains overwhelming in Britain. Around four in five believe that the authorities should allow prisoner visits from an independent organisation and should not subject any prisoners to torture, even if it is to obtain important military information; while seven in ten think that prisoners should be allowed contacts with relatives.

Figure 9. Rules and obligations regarding prisoners of war.

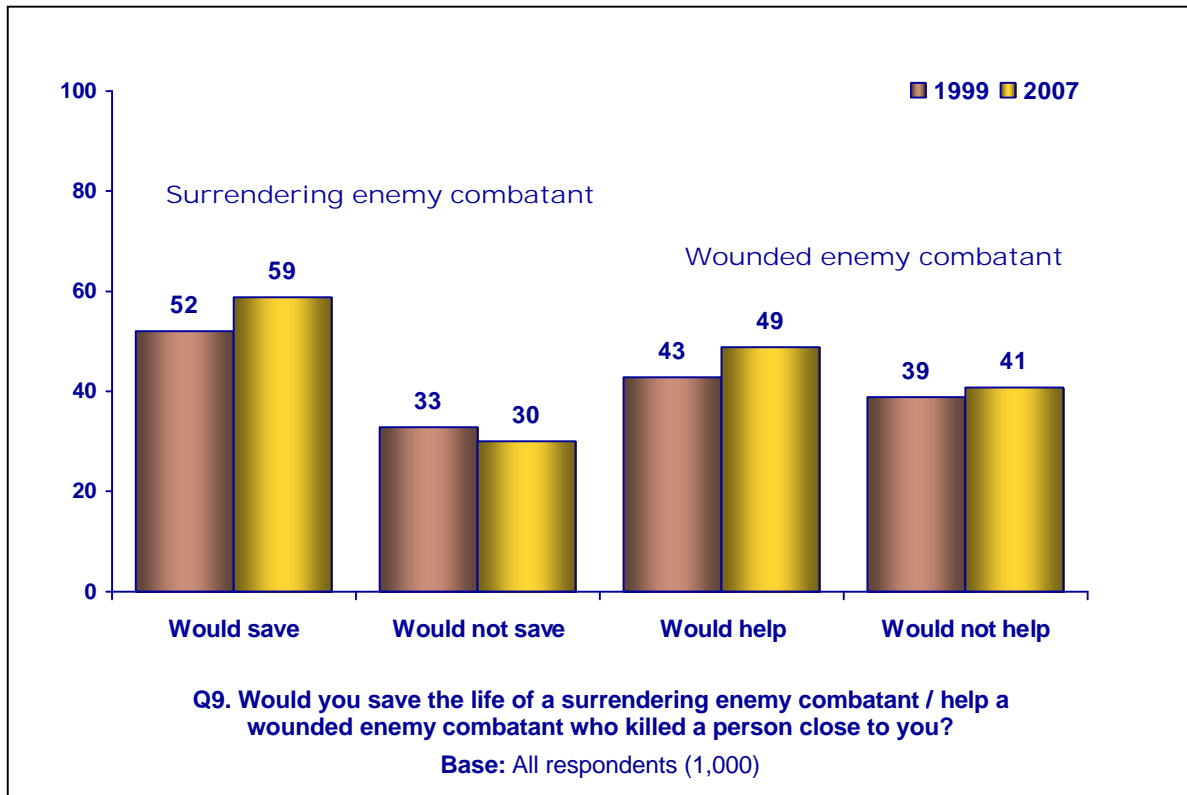


It is only on the issue of contact with relatives that a substantive variation emerges between 2007 and 1999, with a statistically significant 10-point drop in those who believe that PoWs should be able to contact their families. Understanding this drop is important both in relation to international humanitarian law and for the ICRC, as the law stipulates an obligation for POW's to be able to contact their relatives with news of a family nature.

Women (76%) are much more likely than men (63%) to think that contact with relatives should be allowed, as are those over the age of 35 years compared to those under 35 (for example, 18-24: 59% think contact must be allowed; 65+: 73% think it should be allowed). Those who have never served in the military (71%) show statistically significant higher support for contact between PoWs and their families than their military counterparts (62%).

Putting people in hypothetical war-time situations and asking them to make life-or-death decisions does, however, slightly nuance the responses: six in ten (59%) would save a surrendering enemy combatant even if he had killed a person close to them (up from 52% in 1999) but it remains the case that one in three (30%, 1999: 33%) would not save them. Even fewer people would save the life of a wounded enemy combatant in these circumstances (49%, 1999: 43%) while almost as many would do nothing to help (41%, 1999: 39%).

Figure 10. Saving enemy combatants.



Failing to help the wounded is not, however, the same as actually condoning the death of enemy combatants, and this is a limit that most would not cross. Nine in ten (93%, 1999: 93%) say they would not approve of killing of enemy prisoners, even if the other side were doing so. Only one in twenty (6%) feel they could approve the killing, which is slightly more than the 4% who said so in 1999.

9. The Geneva Conventions

Awareness of the Geneva Conventions has risen in the UK over the last eight years from a consensual 86% in 1999 to near unanimity (92%) now. This represents a 6-point increase.

Men (96%) say they are aware in greater numbers than women (89%), and there is a strong correlation between awareness and increasing age, as shown in Figure 11, where only the 18-24 age group fail (by a large margin) to reach an awareness score above 90%. Military service (100%) is clearly a catalyst for awareness.

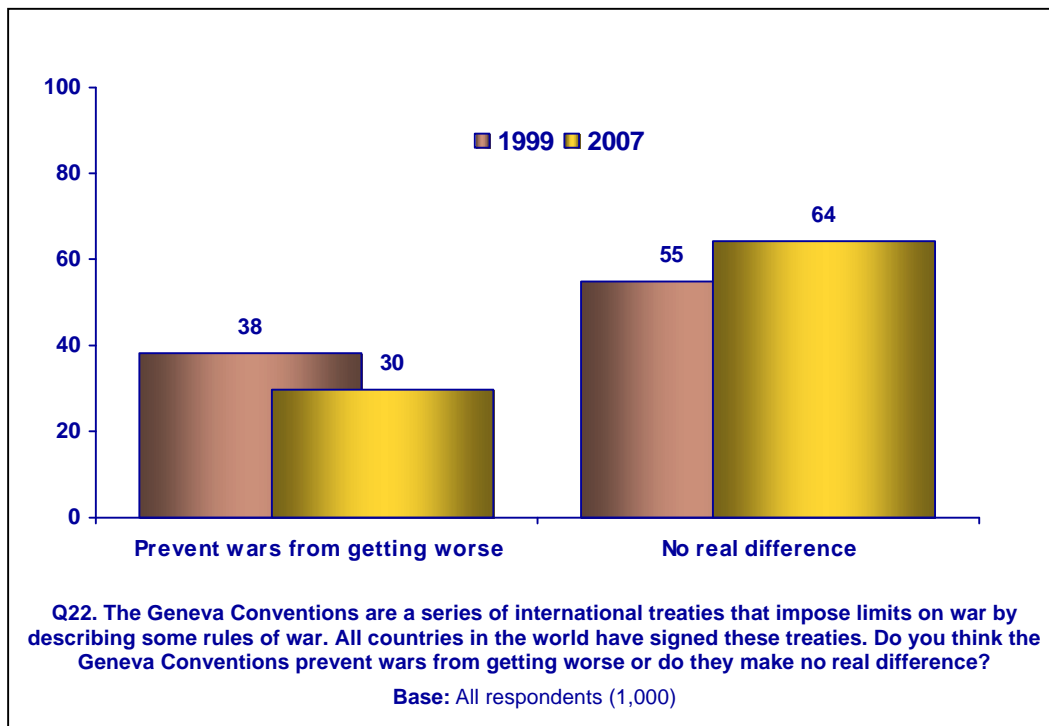
Figure 11. Awareness of the Geneva Conventions by age

Let me ask you something different. Have you ever heard of the Geneva Conventions?	% aware
18-24	66%
25-34	91%
35-44	93%
45-54	98%
55-64	99%
65+	98%
Overall	92%

Attitudinal issues also emerge, with those interested in media war reports (intuitively) more likely to be aware of the Conventions (96%) than those whose interest is minimal (82% aware). Those who perceive world events to be going in the wrong direction are also more likely to be aware of the Conventions (93%) than those who think things are generally fine on the world stage (85%).

Yet how relevant are the Conventions as far as the British public are concerned? Respondents, while aware of the Conventions existence, seem to increasingly doubt their ability to regulate armed conflict in practice. In 1999, nearly four in ten (38%) believed the Conventions to have the ability to prevent wars from getting worse, but now the proportion has dropped by a statistically significant 8-points to 30%. Accordingly, the proportion who thinks the Conventions make no real difference has risen from 55% to 64%.

Figure 12. Effectiveness of the Geneva Conventions



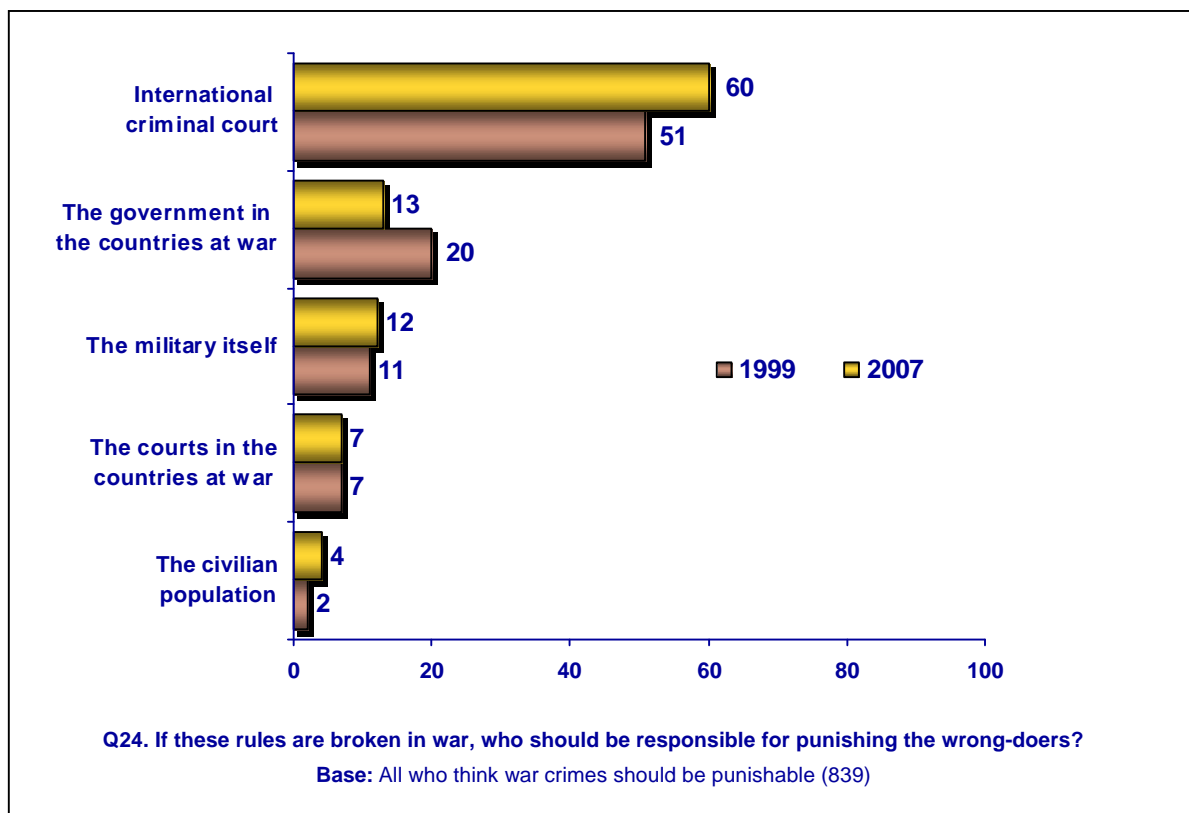
Those who adopt the more pessimistic position that the Conventions make no real difference are also pessimistic about world events in general (67% of those who say world events are going in the wrong direction also appear to believe that there is little the Geneva Conventions could do about it, compared to 57% of those who think events are headed the right way). Those most likely to be pessimistic are also more disinterested in war reports (71% of those not interested are additionally pessimistic about the Geneva Conventions, compared to 60% of those who are interested).

Just because more people appear to be pessimistic about the Conventions' ability to regulate behaviour in war, it does not mean that those rules are thought to be unimportant. Indeed, a large majority (84%) believe that the laws regulating the conduct of war are important enough for breakers of these laws to be brought to justice. This actually represents a 3-point increase compared to 1999 (81%).

Men (89%) are particularly inclined to desire this outcome (women 79%), as are those in the middle age cohorts. It is only the youngest age group (18-24: 76%) and the oldest age group (79%) who drop below the 80% mark. Importantly, nine in ten (86%) of those people who are aware of the Geneva Conventions believe that war time law breakers should be punished. This compares with only 58% among those unaware of the Conventions.

Where people ought to be brought to justice, a sizable majority (60%) believe that it is incumbent on an international criminal court to be the agency of justice, a statistically significant 9-points higher than in 1999. This coincides with a reduction in the number who think that the government in the countries of war should be the arbiter of justice, with only 13% now saying this should be the case compared to 20% in 1999.

Figure 13. Support for an international court being responsible for punishing wrong-doers:



Once again, we see a significant divergence between the sexes. Men are significantly more likely than women (64% vs 55%) to believe that an international court should try the accused, while women (17%) are much more inclined than men (8%) to leave justice to the military.

Social class is also a key indicator of support for an international criminal court exercising justice, as illustrated in Figure 14.

Figure 14. Support for an international court being responsible for punishing wrong-doers:

If these rules are broken in war, who should be responsible for punishing the wrong-doers? BASE: All who believe people should be punished (839)	%
AB	71%
C1	63%
C2	52%
DE	50%
Overall	60%

Among those aware of the Geneva Conventions, a slightly above average 63% believe that an international court should be responsible for justice. While this in itself is perhaps unremarkable, only 6% of those unaware of the Conventions think that an international court should be responsible. Instead, this group prefers governments in the countries of war (40%) or the military itself (30%) to dispense justice. Indeed, twice as many (12%) think that the courts in the countries at war should try the accused rather than an international court.

Irrespective of where the trial takes place, there is little doubt that a trial should take place. Four in five (83%) believe that the accused should be held to account. A small number (7%) are prepared to forget while a similar number (6%) think the perpetrators should be exposed but not put on trial. Little has changed on this over the last eight years, with the corresponding figures for 1999 being 82%, 2% and 4% respectively.

The increase in proportion of those supporting an international criminal court instead of national courts is noteworthy. This could be linked to the high visibility in recent years of international criminal courts – since the 1999 survey there have been high profile cases in front of the International Criminal Courts for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda – it may also be a recognition of the difficulty of national authorities of war-torn countries to assume this crucial responsibility.

10. International interventions

10.1 Future British involvement abroad

There can be little doubt that a desire for the international community to intervene in foreign wars still exists among a vast – if somewhat declining – majority of the British general public. Four in five (77%) want the international community to intervene in war zones, but this is 3-points lower than the 80% who said so in 1999. Twice as many, however, say they want less intervention compared to 1999 (17% vs 8%).

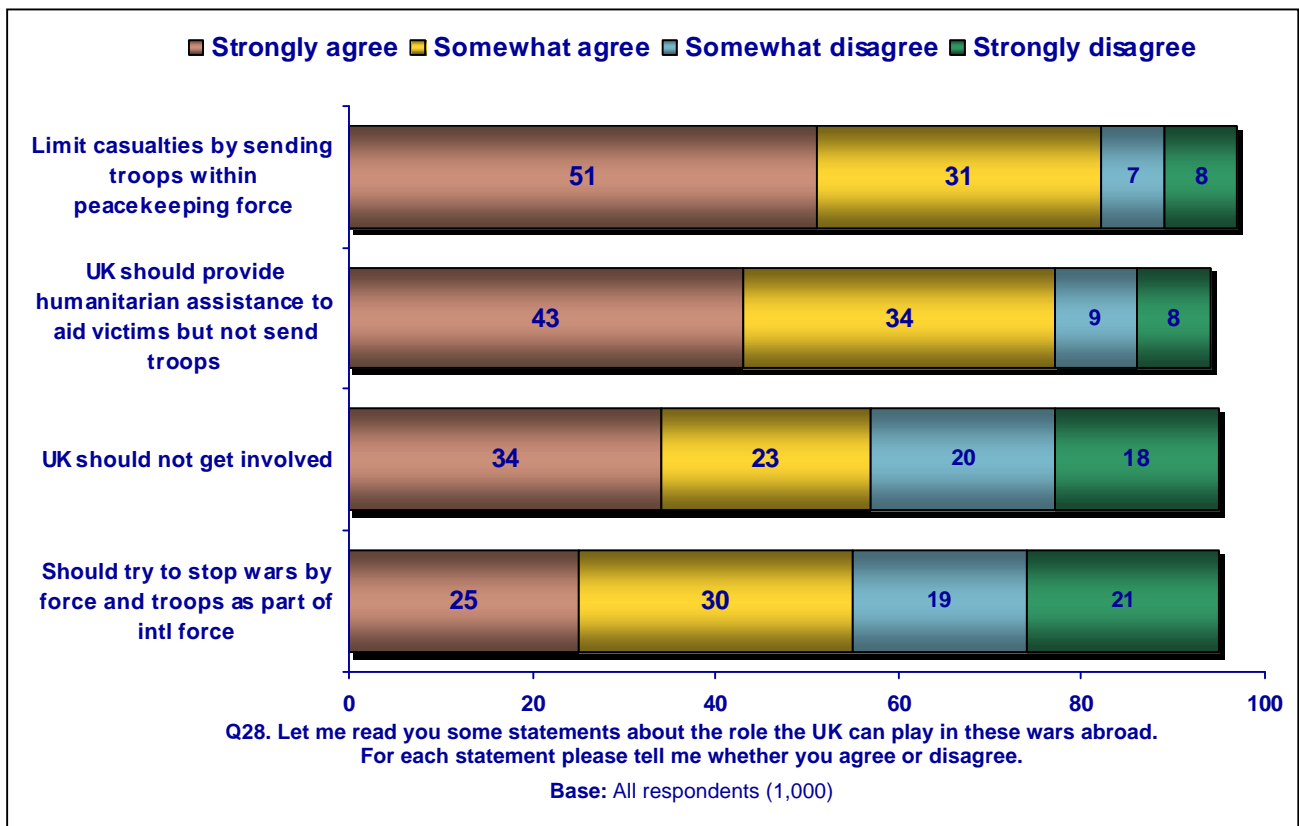
When it comes to intervention by Britain specifically, the public are much more equivocal: a plurality (45%) would like to see less intervention, but four in ten (39%) would like to see more. This effectively represents a reversal of the 1999 position, where the plurality was then in favour of more British intervention, suggesting that the British public recognise a need for an international peace-keeping force but increasingly prefer Britain not to be involved in it.

Figure 15 Future Interventions

	By international community	By the UK
More intervention – 2007	77%	39%
More intervention – 1999	80%	48%
Less intervention – 2007	17%	45%
Less intervention – 1999	8%	33%

As figure 16 implies, however, it is often the case that people can simultaneously hold views that are intuitively incompatible. For many, a general ‘in principle’ view may be held which they will bend when specific circumstances or alternatives are presented to them. This might explain why 57% “strongly” or “somewhat” believe that Britain should simply not get involved in wars abroad while 55% simultaneously say that Britain should stop wars by force, sending troops as part of an international expedition.

Figure 16. Strategies for British involvement in wars abroad



The most widely held view, however, focuses on the UK only deploying troops in a peace-keeping role. Overall, four in five (82%, 1999: 85%) subscribe to this view, of which 51% "strongly agree" that Britain adopts such a strategy. Men (86%) more than women (79%) subscribe to this proposition, with those interested in war reports (86%) and those aware of the Geneva Conventions (84%) also doing so to statistically significantly higher levels than their counterparts.

That said, three quarters of respondents (77%) would also support a more passive role, with Britain merely providing humanitarian assistance, but not sending troops. The strength of support for this option is more split, however, with 43% saying it is extremely important and 34% saying somewhat important. Support for this strategy has risen slightly since 1999, with the figure rising from 75% to its present mark (77%).

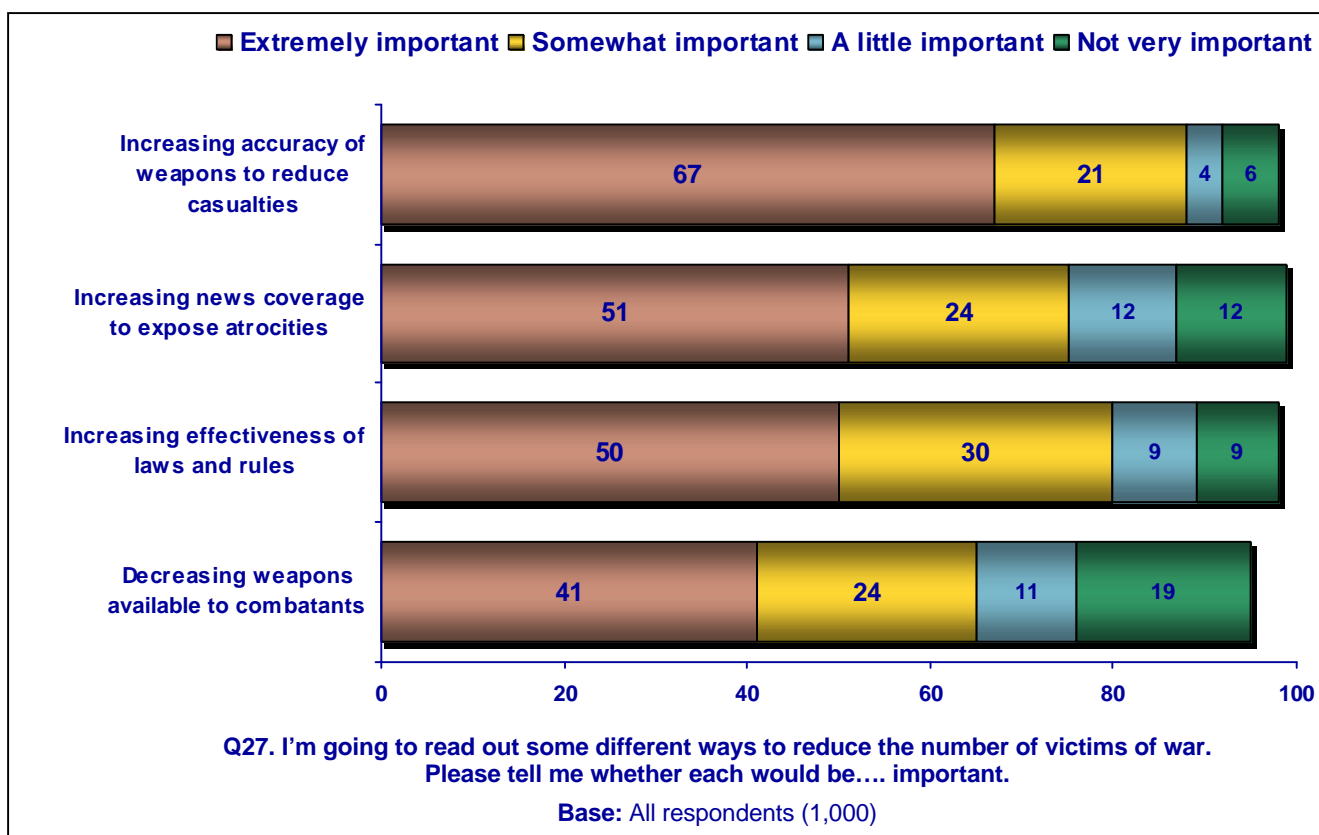
The remaining two options also receive majority support - but only just. Fifty-seven per cent think that Britain should not get involved in wars abroad at all (1999: 47% - a statistically significant rise); while slightly fewer (55%) think that Britain should take the most hard-line option by sending troops as part of an international force to stop these wars by force.

Those adopting the least interventionist position are more likely to be women than men (61% vs 53%), over 65's (59%), members of the Asian community (74%), those not interested in war reports (69%) and those unaware of the Geneva Conventions (77%). Their 'opposite numbers' who are more inclined to choose the most interventionist strategy are men (66% vs. 45% women), 35-44's (61%), and those who have experienced military combat (72%).

10.2 Other kinds of interventions

Finally, we consider the other options available to the international community, specifically in relation to reducing the numbers of victims – but on this matter, generally speaking not much has changed between 1999 and now. The British remain supportive of all the measures outlined as a means of protecting civilians, with increasing the accuracy of weapons and increasing the effectiveness of laws that limit what combatants can do once again perceived to be the main priorities.

Figure 17. Ways of reducing the victims of war



The accuracy of weapons clearly dominates the agenda: not only do more people in total (88%) think it is important to improve accuracy, but the strength of conviction is also more intense than on any of the other measures (67% say it is extremely important to do so). This also marks the only major departure from the 1999 survey, where 81% had felt that weapon accuracy should be improved. The 7 point increase noted in 2007 is, once again, statistically significant.

The second priority is to increase the effectiveness of laws to limit what combatants can do in war. Overall, four in five (79%) said this was important, a single point fall compared to 1999.

The other two ways in which civilian casualties could be reduced also show relatively slight falls from their 1999 levels. Firstly, three-quarters (75%) think that increasing news coverage of wars in order to expose atrocities is important, but this is 3-points lower (not significant) than the 78% who said so in 1999. Similarly, two in three (65%) feel that decreasing the number of weapons available to soldiers and fighters in the world will reduce casualties, 5-points lower than the 1999 score (70%).

11. Research methodology

This report is the product of a nationally representative telephone survey of 1,000 adults aged 18+. Interviews were conducted across the country and the results have been weighted to the known profile of all GB adults. ICM is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.

GB DEMOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT

The survey is based on a number of demographic quota controls that are designed to produce a representative sample of the adult population. In theory, these quotas should ensure that un-weighted and weighted data closely match each other. However, research projects typically have some difficulties in reaching certain sections of the population who sometimes tend to be less research friendly than others - for example, people from younger age groups or members of minority ethnic communities. In order to correct for differential refusal within the contacted sample, a rim weighting matrix is applied to ensure that the profile of each sample exactly matches that of the overall population.

The weighted demographic profile of every ICM nationally representative survey therefore conforms to the following breakdown:

SEX:		
	Male	48%
	Female	52%
AGE:		
	18-24	12%
	25-34	16%
	35-44	20%
	45-54	17%
	55-64	15%
	65+	21%
SOCIAL CLASS:		
	AB	26%
	C1	29%
	C2	21%
	DE	24%
WORKING STATUS:		
	Full time	45%
	Part time	12%
	Not working but seeking work	3%
	Not working, not seeking work	5%
	Retired	28%
	Student	3%
	Other	4%
TENURE:		
	Own outright	33%
	Own with a mortgage	39%
	Council rent/housing association	13%
	Private rent	10%
	Other	5%
ETHNICITY:		
	White	89%
	Mixed race	2%
	Asian or Asian British	4%
	Black or Black British	3%
	Chinese/other	2%

REGION

Quotas on the geographical distribution of the GB population were also in place, based on Government Office Regions. These are the top level units on which the UK is divided by Census (NUTS Level 1). There are 11 such regions, all of which are broken down by general population in the table below. In addition, it shows how ICM sometimes group geographically contiguous or approximate regions for more robust cross analysis.

Government Office Region	All people	Aggregated regions
North East	5%	North England 25%
North West	12%	
Yorkshire & the Humber	9%	
East Midlands	7%	Midlands 26%
West Midlands	9%	
Eastern	9%	
London	12%	South East 27%
South East	14%	
South West	9%	Wales & South West 14%
Wales	5%	
Scotland	9%	9%
TOTAL	100%	101% ¹

STATISTICAL TOLERANCES

It should be remembered at all times that a sample of 1,000 adults aged 18+ and not the entire population has been interviewed. Consequently, all results are subject to sampling tolerances, which mean that not all differences are statistically significant.

We can, however, predict the variation between the sample results and the 'true' values (if everyone in the population had been interviewed) from knowledge of the size of the samples on which the results are based and the number of times answers are given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95% - that is, the chances are 95 times out of 100 that the 'true' value will fall within a specified range. The table below illustrates the predicted ranges for different sample sizes and the percentage results at the 95% confidence level.

SAMPLE SIZE	SAMPLING TOLERANCES APPLICABLE TO %'S AT OR NEAR		
	10% OR 90% + / -	30% OR 70% + / -	50% + / -
100 interviews	5.88%	8.98%	9.8%
250 interviews	3.72%	5.68%	6.2%
500 interviews	2.63%	4.02%	4.38%
1000 interviews	1.86%	2.84%	3.1%

For example, with a sample size of 1,000 interviews where 50% (the worst case scenario as far as tolerances are concerned) give a particular answer, we can be 95% certain that the 'true' value will fall within the range of 3.1% from the sample result.

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample (say, between men and women), different results may be obtained. The difference may be 'real' or it may occur by chance (because a sample rather than the entire population has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one, i.e. if it is 'statistically significant', we again have to know

¹ Inconsistent %'s due to rounding of raw numbers into percentages.

the size of the samples, the % giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume the 95% confidence level again, the differences between the results of two separate groups must be greater than the values given in the table below:

SAMPLE SIZES TO BE COMPARED	DIFFERENCES REQUIRED TO BE STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT AT OR NEAR		
	10% OR 90% + / -	30% OR 70% + / -	50% + / -
100 and 100	8.3%	12.7%	13.9%
200 and 200	5.9%	8.9%	9.8%
500 and 500	3.7%	5.7%	6.2%

SOCIAL CLASS DEFINITIONS

Most market research projects classify the population into social grades, usually on the basis of the Market Research Society occupational groupings (MRS, 1991).

They are defined as follows:

A.	Professionals such as doctors, solicitors or dentists, chartered people like architects; fully qualified people with a large degree of responsibility such as senior civil servants, senior business executives and high ranking grades within the armed forces. Retired people, previously grade A, and their widows.
B.	People with very senior jobs such as university lecturers, heads of local government departments, middle management in business organizations, bank managers, police inspectors, and upper grades in the armed forces.
C1.	All others doing non-manual jobs, including nurses, technicians, pharmacists, salesmen, publicans, clerical workers, police sergeants and middle ranks of the armed forces.
C2.	Skilled manual workers, foremen, manual workers with special qualifications such as lorry drivers, security officers and lower grades of the armed forces.
D.	Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, including labourers and those serving apprenticeships. Machine minders, farm labourers, lab assistants and postmen.
E.	Those on the lowest levels of subsistence including all those dependent upon the state long-term. Casual workers, and those without a regular income.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

2007 ATTITUDES TO WAR SURVEY

Q1 First, when you think about what is going on in the world today, are things mainly going in the right direction or mainly going in the wrong direction?

Right direction	1
Wrong direction	2
Both (do not read out)	3
Don't know	4
Refuse	5

⇒ SPLIT SAMPLE A

Q2 As you know, newspapers and the TV news report on wars taking place in countries abroad. When you see those stories, are you...READ OUT

⇒ SPLIT SAMPLE B

Q2 As you know, newspapers and the TV news report on wars taking place in countries abroad, not involving the UK. When you see those stories, are you...READ OUT

	Split A	Split B
Very interested	1	1
Interested	2	2
Somewhat interested	3	3
Only a little interested	4	4
Not interested at all	5	5
Don't know	6	6
Refuse	7	7

⇒ SPLIT SAMPLE A

Q3 When you see stories on war abroad, do you generally find yourself favouring one of the sides, or generally do you not take sides?

⇒ SPLIT SAMPLE B

Q3 When you see stories on war abroad not involving the UK, do you generally find yourself favouring one of the sides, or generally do you not take sides?

	Split A	Split B
Take sides	1	1
Not take sides	2	2
Don't know	3	3
Refuse	4	4

⇒ ASK ALL

Q4 When thinking about favouring one side in a war, which is more important to you?

What each side is fighting for	1
OR How each side acts during the war	2
Both (Do not read out)	3
Don't know	4
Refuse	5

Q5 Can many of these wars abroad be avoided or are they mainly unavoidable?

Can be avoided	1
Mainly unavoidable	2
Don't know	3
Refuse	4

Q6 Why do you think these wars abroad continue to happen? Because of...READ OUT. ROTATE

A failure of human nature	1
OR a failure of governments	2
Both (Do not read out)	3
Don't know	4
Refuse	5

Q7 Now I would like to ask you some general questions about how, in your view, combatants – soldiers and fighters – should behave in times of war. When combatants attack to weaken the enemy, should they...READ OUT. ROTATE

Attack enemy combatants and civilians	1
Attack enemy combatants and avoid civilians as much as possible	2
OR Attack only enemy combatants and leave the civilians alone	3
Don't know	4
Refuse	5

READ OUT: Let me ask you about some things that combatants – soldiers and fighters – may do to weaken the enemy they are fighting against. Please tell me for each of these things whether it is OK or not OK to do it to weaken the enemy?

⇒ SPLIT SAMPLE A

Q8 What about attacking civilians who voluntarily gave food and shelter to enemy combatants. Would it be OK or not OK to attack them in order to weaken the enemy?

⇒ SPLIT SAMPLE B

Q8 What about attacking civilians who were forced to give food and shelter to enemy combatants. Would it be OK or not OK to attack them in order to weaken the enemy?

	Split A	Split B
OK	1	1
Not OK	2	2
Don't know	3	3
Refuse	4	4

READ OUT TO ALL: I will now describe a situation that may happen during war. I would like you to imagine that you are part of that situation. Tell me how you think you would behave if the decisions were completely up to you.

⇒ SPLIT SAMPLE A

Q9 Would you save the life of a surrendering enemy combatant who killed a person close to you?

⇒ SPLIT SAMPLE B

Q9 Would you help a wounded enemy combatant who killed a person close to you?

	Split A	Split B
Would save/help	1	1
Would not save/help	2	2
Don't know	3	3
Refuse	4	4

READ OUT TO ALL: Now I'm going to ask you your opinion on some of the things soldiers and fighters might do in times of war.

⇒ SPLIT SAMPLE A

Q10 What about attacking enemy combatants in populated villages or towns in order to weaken the enemy, knowing that many civilians would be killed. Is that wrong, or just part of war?

⇒ SPLIT SAMPLE B

Q10 What about attacking enemy combatants in populated villages or towns in order to weaken the enemy, knowing that many women and children would be killed. Is that wrong or just part of war?

	Split A	Split B
Wrong	1	1
Part of war	2	2
Both (do not read out)	3	3
Don't know	4	4
Refuse	5	5

⇒ ASK ALL

Q11a What about depriving the civilian population of food, medicine or water in order to weaken the enemy. Is that wrong or just part of war?

Wrong	1
Part of war	2
Both (do not read out)	3
Don't know	4
Refuse	5

Q11b What about attacking religious and historical monuments, in order to weaken the enemy. Is that wrong, or just part of war?

Wrong	1
Part of war	2
Both (do not read out)	3
Don't know	4
Refuse	5

Q12a What about taking civilian hostages in order to get something in exchange? . Is that wrong, or just part of war?

Wrong	1
Part of war	2
Both (do not read out)	3
Don't know	4
Refuse	5

⇒ IF WRONG/BOTH ANYWHERE AT Q10-Q12a ASK

Q12b You say that some things are wrong in times of war. Do you think they are wrong primarily because it is...READ OUT

Against the law	1
Against your personal code	2
Against your religion	3
Against what most people here believe	4
Against your culture	5
Against human rights	6
Other (please specify)	7
Don't know	8
Refuse	9

⇒ ASK ALL

Q13 Let me ask you something else. Which, if any, of the following types of weapons do you think should never be used during war? READ OUT. ROTATE.

Laser blinding weapons (IF ASKED: These are weapons designed to cause permanent blindness)	1
Napalm	2
Nuclear weapons	3
Chemical/biological weapons	4
Cluster bombs (IF ASKED: a type of bomb which can contain over 600 "sub bombs" or bomblets within it)	5
Bombing (general)	6
Don't know	7
Refuse	8

Q14 What about soldiers and fighters planting landmines to stop the movements of enemy combatants, even though civilians may step on them accidentally. Is it OK to do that if it would weaken the enemy?

OK if necessary	1
Not OK	2
Don't know	3
Refuse	4

People on War Survey Report

Q15 Now let me ask you how prisoners of war should be treated. Must a prisoner of war be allowed to contact relatives, or doesn't that have to be allowed?

Must allow	1
Don't have to allow	2
Don't know	3
Refuse	4

Q16 Is it true that a prisoner of war cannot be subjected to torture to obtain important military information, or can a prisoner be subjected to torture?

Cannot subject	1
Can subject	2
Don't know	3
Refuse	4

Q17 Must a prisoner of war be allowed a visit by a representative from an independent organisation, or doesn't that have to be allowed?

Must allow	1
Don't have to allow	2
Don't know	3
Refuse	4

Q18 Do you think that torture of captured enemy soldiers or fighters should or should not be allowed in certain cases to obtain important military information?

Should be allowed	1
Should not be allowed	2
Don't know	3
Refuse	4

Q19 Once again, I want you to imagine yourself in the following situation and tell me what you think you would do if the decisions were completely up to you. If one side in the war is killing prisoners, would you approve the killing of prisoners by the OTHER side, or would you not approve it?

Would approve	1
Would not approve	2
Don't know	3
Refuse	4

Q20 In general, do you ever think that captured enemy soldiers or fighters deserve to die?

Deserve to die	1
Don't deserve to die	2
Don't know	3
Refuse	4

Q21 Let me ask you something different. Have you ever heard of the Geneva Conventions?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	3
Refuse	4

Q22 Let me read you a statement about the Geneva Conventions. The Geneva Conventions are a series of international treaties that impose limits on war by describing some rules of war. All countries in the world have signed these treaties.

Do you think the Geneva Conventions prevent wars from getting worse or do they make no real difference?

Prevent wars from getting worse	1
No real difference	2
Don't know	3
Refuse	4

Q23 Are there rules or laws that are so important that, if broken during war, the person who broke them should be punished?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know	3
Refuse	4

⇒ IF NO/DON'T KNOW/REFUSE, GO TO Q26

Q24 If these rules are broken in war, who should be responsible for punishing the wrongdoers? READ OUT. ROTATE. CODE ONE

The government in the countries of war	1
The courts in the countries at war	2
International criminal court	3
The military itself	4
The civilian population	5
Other (please specify)	6
DO NOT READ OUT: Doesn't apply – rules are not broken	7
Don't know	8
Refuse	9

Q25 When the war is over, should people who have broken the rules....READ OUT. ROTATE. CODE ONE

Be put on trial	1
Be exposed to the public but not be put on trial	2
Be forgotten/forgiven or granted amnesty	3
Don't know	4
Refuse	5

⇒ SPLIT SAMPLE A

Q26 In the future, would you like to see more or less intervention from the international community to deal with these kinds of issues?

⇒ SPLIT SAMPLE B

Q26 In the future, would you like to see more or less intervention by the UK to deal with these kids of issues?

	Split A	Split B
More intervention	1	1
Less intervention	2	2
DO NOT READ OUT: No intervention	3	3
Don't know	4	4
Refuse	5	5

⇒ ASK ALL

Q27 I'm going to read you some different ways to reduce the number of victims of war. Please tell me whether each would be extremely important, somewhat important, a little important or not very important way to reduce the number of victims?

READ OUT. ROTATE

- 1 = extremely important
- 2 = somewhat important
- 3 = a little important
- 4 = not very important

Increasing the effectiveness of laws and rules that limit what combatants can do in war	1 2 3 4 DK
Increasing the accuracy of weapons to reduce the unintended casualties	1 2 3 4 DK
Increasing the news coverage of these wars so that atrocities are exposed	1 2 3 4 DK
Decreasing the numbers of weapons available to soldiers and fighters in the world	1 2 3 4 DK

Q28 Let me read you some statements about the role the UK can play in these wars abroad. For each statement please tell me if you agree or disagree. Is that strongly/somewhat?

- 1 = Strongly agree
- 2 = Somewhat agree
- 3 = Somewhat disagree
- 4 = Strongly disagree

The UK should provide humanitarian assistance to aid the victims of these wars, but not send troops	1 2 3 4 DK
The UK should try to stop these wars by using force and by sending troops as part of an international force	1 2 3 4 DK
The UK should try to limit casualties by sending troops as part of a peacekeeping force	1 2 3 4 DK
The UK should not get involved in these wars abroad	1 2 3 4 DK

Q29 Newspapers and TV sometimes report on atrocities taking place in wars abroad. Do you think atrocities like these can be prevented or are they inevitable?

Yes – can be prevented	1
No –they are inevitable	2
Don't know	3
Refuse	4

Classification

D1. Gender

Male	1
Female	2

D2. Age

18-24	1
25-34	2
35-44	3
45-54	4
55-64	5
65-74	6
75+	7

D3. Working status

Working full time (30+ hrs per week)	1
Working part time (1-29 hrs per week)	2
Unemployed, seeking work	3
Unemployed, not seeking work	4
Retired	5
Not working – disabled	6
Working - disabled	7
Student	8
Looking after house/children	9
Other	10

D4. Tenure

Own a property outright	1
Own with a mortgage	2
Council rent/housing association rent	3
Private rent	4
Other	5

D5. Social grade

AB	1
C1	2
C2	3
DE	4

D6. What is your current marital status?

Married	1
Single	2
Cohabiting	3
Divorced/separated	4
Widow/er	5
Other	6
Don't know	7

D7. Do you have any children in the household?

Yes – under 5	1
Yes – 5-10	2
Yes – 11-15	3
Yes 16-18	4
No	5

D8. First of all, to which of these ethnic groups do you consider you belong? READ OUT

White British/Irish/other	1
Mixed race	2
Asian or Asian British	3
Black or Black British	4
Chinese	5
Other ethnic group	6
Don't know	7

D9. At some point, did you serve in the military or did you not serve in the military

Yes	1
No	2

⇒ IF SERVED IN MILITARY

D10. Did you ever find yourself in combat or did you not find yourself in combat?

Male	1
Female	2



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