

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



## Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

*Intel for Advocacy*

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### **THE PROBLEM WITH DONALD TRUMP'S DIPLOMACY ISN'T DIPLOMACY, IT'S DONALD TRUMP**

It might have made some sense for us to focus our newsletter this week on recently-ousted National Security Advisor/mustachioed warmonger John Bolton. But [seeing as this issue has been well covered and beaten to a pulp](#), we thought we'd use this opportunity to shift the conversation to the war in Afghanistan (an issue that apparently finally drove Trump to dump Bolton).

The eighteenth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks passed this week, which means any American born after that date has grown up with their country in a state of perpetual—you could say “endless”—war.

Donald Trump had a good opportunity recently to negotiate a deal with the Taliban and to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan, hopefully beginning the long process of bringing peace to the decades-long war torn country. But as we've seen time and again, Trump's vanity, ignorance, and recklessness got in the way, and it [appears](#) that negotiations have been indefinitely shelved with the war there needlessly carrying on as it has.

We've also noticed that there seems to be some confusion among progressives and our pro-diplomacy allies about how to respond to and talk about Trump's screw up. While it may feel good to attack Trump for inviting Taliban leaders to Camp David (however misguided it was to do so the week of the 9/11 anniversary), **the reality is that negotiating with the Taliban is an essential component to bring peace to Afghanistan.**

#### **MESSAGING**

You can read what we said about this latest Trump mishap [here](#), but here are some broader points to remember and share:

**The reported deal between the U.S. and the Taliban was not a “peace deal” for Afghanistan.**

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- Instead the reported agreement was meant to end the U.S. military occupation, obtain assurances that violent groups like al-Qaeda won't re-emerge in territory the Taliban controls, and represents a first step toward beginning the Afghan-led peace process.
- Pegging the U.S. military withdrawal to the final outcomes of a final Afghan-led peace deal is an approach that has repeatedly failed in the past and is only a recipe for more conflict and violence.
- Trump's decision to end negotiations in the aftermath of his Camp David proposal imperils peace talks between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban that were set to begin later this month.

## **There is no military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan.**

- The United States' 18-year-long military-first approach has [clearly failed](#). Ongoing U.S. military operations have only served to further destabilize Afghanistan and prolong war.
- Leaving U.S. troops in Afghanistan won't prevent the emergence of violent groups that perpetrate terrorism. Instead our military-first approach to the conflict and empowerment of non-state militias that have little regard for the rule of law or human rights – funded by the CIA – has only led to the proliferation of violent groups in Afghanistan.
- A new approach requires withdrawing U.S. troops, ending the war through a negotiated settlement, addressing local drivers of conflict, and establishing a diplomatic mission to facilitate a sustainable peace.

## **Ending the war does not mean disengaging from Afghanistan or a leaving a vacuum for violent groups that perpetrate terrorism to fill.**

- Stabilization operations should be situated within a comprehensive diplomatic and peacebuilding strategy that focuses on building local governance capacity, economic empowerment, and respect for human rights and the rule of law.

## **Repealing the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) is necessary to reorienting our strategy to conflict prevention.**

- Multiple presidents have used the 2001 AUMF to continue the failed military-first approach in Afghanistan, as well as wholly unrelated and unnecessary conflicts in the region.
- Focusing on eradicating violent groups through more violence and the Trump administration's emphasis on countering "ideology" fuels both anti-American sentiment and Islamophobia around the world.

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- None of this addresses local drivers to conflict that are most often rooted in failed governance, lacking economic opportunity, and violence-related trauma.

For more, see our issue brief and recommendations on Afghanistan [here](#).

## WHAT CAN CONGRESS DO?

Members of Congress can and should push Trump to restart negotiations with the Taliban and similarly initiate a regional dialogue aimed at securing a truly lasting peace. They should also reiterate that there is no military solution to this conflict and that ending the U.S. military occupation can help facilitate a peace process with sustained U.S. and multilateral diplomacy.

Congress can also hold hearings (such as the one HFAC Chairman Engel has [recently announced](#)) on the Trump administration's diplomatic strategy and pass legislation like the [Afghan WIN Act](#), introduced by Reps. William Keating (D-MA) and Ann Wagner (R-MO), which would require the State Department to implement the requirements of the Women, Peace, and Security Act into its diplomatic strategy for Afghanistan.

Congress should also repeal the 2001 AUMF, which provides legal cover for the endless war in Afghanistan (and around the world), and advocate for bold, significant investments in peacebuilding, economic assistance, and anticorruption programming in Afghanistan, with a focus on empowering civil society and local actors to address the local drivers to conflict.

## FURTHER READING

- [U.S., Taliban peace talks produce draft deal on 2 issues. Trump envoy says](#)
- [We need to take the best deal we can get in Afghanistan](#)
- [The U.S. Shouldn't Stumble Out of Afghanistan](#)
- [Coming to Terms with America's Undeniable Failure in Afghanistan](#)
- [Diplomacy Can't Solve all of Afghanistan's Problems](#)
- [False Summit: Trump's bizarre Camp David stunt has imperiled the best chance in years for a negotiated peace in Afghanistan.](#)
- [Taliban Peace Talks Must Not Ignore CIA-Funded Afghan Militias. Report Says](#)
- [Terrorist 'safe havens' are a myth — and no reason for continuing the war in Afghanistan](#)

## **BURIED LEDES**

It turns out there's [pretty easy way](#) to prevent **rich criminals and foreign adversaries from laundering money by creating U.S. shell companies.**

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[Actual](#) Iranian human rights and pro-diplomacy **advocates *inside Iran* want the U.S. to support the Iran nuclear deal** and refrain from “regime change” policies and rhetoric.

ABC News this week [published](#) the **transcripts of Jamal Khashoggi’s final moments and the aftermath of his murder**. Friendly reminder: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has yet to be held accountable.

An open letter from a group of national security professionals is [urging](#) the international community to **break the cycle of violence by addressing the “apocalyptic” conditions that the tens of thousands of detainees in Syria under the age of twelve are being held in by U.S.-allied forces**.

[40 organizations](#) from [across the progressive movement](#) **urged Congress to protect their right to boycott unjust policies no matter where they occur**.

A new [poll](#) from the Chicago Council found that **“Americans are more likely to say that U.S. military interventions make the United States less safe (46%) rather than more (27%).”**

A group of retired admirals and generals this week **urged Trump to abandon his plan to zero out refugee admissions** to the United States, [saying](#) “welcoming refugees is not just a matter of smart policy and a reflection of our national values.”

60+ Organizations [Urge Repeal of the Iraq War \(2002\) AUMF to remain in the FY20 NDAA](#).

Meanwhile, a separate group of retired U.S. leaders are [urging Congress](#) to maintain a provision in the FY2020 National Defense Authorization Act that would **bar any unauthorized military action against Iran**.

[And finally](#), **sucking beef through a straw to own the libs**.