

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

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SL: Can the Afghanistan Papers Teach Us What the Pentagon Papers Didn't?

The Afghanistan Papers: Will we learn our lesson this time?

This week, Congress approved an exorbitant, virtually-unrestrained \$746 billion budget for an already-overfunded Pentagon. You may not have known it from this vote of confidence in the status quo, but mere days earlier, the Washington Post [released](#) **a trove of classified documents and interviews with senior U.S. officials detailing the devastating failure of 19 years of war in Afghanistan, and a deliberate misinformation campaign to conceal the truth.**

These “Afghanistan Papers” are revelatory, offering critical insight into what went wrong in the longest — and still ongoing — war in U.S. history. But it would be a mistake to treat them as merely a history lesson — to move on and support a Pentagon budget increase the next week. The Afghanistan Papers should be a wake-up call. The foreign policy status quo has failed, not just in Afghanistan, but everywhere. It's time for a progressive alternative.

“We Didn't Know What We Were Doing”

The Afghanistan Papers confirm what we have long [believed](#): the war is an utter failure. Its costs — in the lives of service members and civilians, in the security of a nation, and in the trillion taxpayer dollars that could otherwise have been [used to meet](#) critical human needs — are extraordinary. These sacrifices have been made in the service of objectives that, in most cases, we are even further from achieving than we were on day one.

As the Papers reveal, even the war's leading proponents secretly felt it was directionless, futile, and often counterproductive. In the words of three-star general and White House Afghanistan “war czar” Douglas Lute: “We didn't know what we were doing.” Top U.S. officials have understood for years that there is no military solution in sight — no number of U.S. troops or years of occupation that will lead to a peaceful, prosperous Afghanistan. But rather than ending

WIN WITHOUT WAR



the war, admitting failure, and accepting a negotiated solution, they chose to lie to the public and continue unabated.

Lessons-Learned

After 18 years of senseless devastation, it is well past time to **end our military role in Afghanistan**. That means withdrawing U.S. forces, engaging with all parties in the conflict to establish a ceasefire, and replacing military operations with a surge of diplomatic, peacebuilding, and development efforts.

But ending the war in Afghanistan is not enough. The Afghanistan Papers don't just reveal what went wrong with one war, they reveal what's wrong with U.S. foreign policy as a whole:

- **We Can't Bomb Our Way to Peace** — The catastrophic war in Afghanistan is the result of a foreign policy establishment that treats all international problems as military problems. Fueled by a militarized culture, runaway Pentagon budget, and sprawling military-industrial complex, the U.S. military has become a hammer in search of a nail. But as the Papers reveal, war can't build peace. War can't establish democracy. War can't develop a nation. War can't even effectively combat violent groups that perpetrate terrorism. Learning the lessons of the Afghanistan Papers means ending endless wars that have little chance of success, and resisting the rattling of sabers for future military action.
- **We Have Other Tools in Our Toolkit** — Military intervention has failed, but it is not our only option. There is a clear path toward human security for all in our current foreign policy crises, from Afghanistan to North Korea: the path of diplomacy and peacebuilding. As one expert [argued](#) in a recent article in *Responsible Statecraft*, rebuilding our capacity for diplomacy and peacebuilding is our best chance to “pull humanity out of its endless war rut.” Even better, data-driven evidence shows it works.
- **Foreign Policy Should Be By and For the People**— The ability of U.S. officials to systematically mislead the public about the depth of the failure in Afghanistan exposes the dangers of leaving foreign policy in the hands of a few. Foreign policy-making should be transparent, [democratic](#), and accountable to the people it serves and directly impacts. A necessary first step is to repeal the 2001 and 2002 Authorizations for the Use of Military Force, which have served as blank checks for endless wars for 18 years.

When the Pentagon Papers revealed that the U.S. government had secretly expanded its involvement in an unwinnable war in Vietnam, it was widely believed that we would never make the same mistake again. Then came Afghanistan.

This time, we must learn our lessons, or we are doomed to repeat them... again.

WIN WITHOUT WAR



To Watch For on Your Holiday Break

For months, North Korea has warned that the United States has until the end of the year to demonstrate its willingness to negotiate, or it would change tacks. As the deadline draws near, the Trump administration has shown no sign of coming to the table. That means our holiday season might just be interrupted by a missile or nuclear test. How did we get here? What might come next? And how can diplomacy get us out? Read [our assessment](#).

A Year Of Winning Without War

As 2019 comes to a close, we wanted to highlight a few of the most exciting moments from our year of fighting for a more progressive U.S. foreign policy:

1. **Fighting U.S. Involvement in Yemen** — In a historic step, Congress passed both a war powers resolution to [end](#) U.S. support for the Saudi-led war in Yemen *and* bills to [block](#) weapons sales to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Though both were ultimately vetoed, the progress made is unmistakable.
2. **Resisting the Militarization of the Border** — After a year-long campaign, the DoD Office of the Inspector General recently [launched an investigation](#) into Donald Trump's misuse of U.S. troops and military resources on the southern border.
3. **Moving the Needle on the NDAA** — Though they didn't make it into the final bill, the House version of the National Defense Authorization Act [contained a slew of progressive victories](#) that show just how far the narrative has shifted. The times they are a-changin'.
4. **Protecting the Right to Protest** — When the National Park Service proposed charging fees for protests on the National Mall, over 40,000 Win Without War activists joined the movement to [fight back](#). This October, the park service withdrew its proposal.
5. **Envisioning a Progressive Alternative** — We're not just opposed to the status quo. We have a vision for the future. This year, we released our "[Principles of a Progressive Foreign Policy](#)" and "[A U.S. Grand Strategy for a Values-Driven Foreign Policy](#)."

P.S.

This is the last Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief that you will receive in 2019. If you've enjoyed these weekly debriefs and want to ensure that our vision for a progressive foreign policy grows even stronger in 2020, please consider [making a tax-deductible donation today](#).

And as a final sign off until 2020, we wish a peaceful and joyous holiday season to you and your loved ones, from the *entire* Win Without War family.

WIN WITHOUT WAR



BURIED LEDES

The Global North has led the world into a climate crisis. Now, it's blocking solutions. **Refusing to accept responsibility for their emissions, rich countries [torpedoed](#) the U.N. climate talks.**

North Korea's end-of-year deadline for the U.S. to demonstrate willingness to negotiate is drawing near. We don't know what will come next, but we know [diplomacy is the solution](#).

Twitter [deactivated](#) 88,000 Saudi bot accounts for spreading "information" on behalf of the Saudi government.

One **natural gas leak in Ohio [released](#) more methane than "the entire oil and gas industries of many nations do in a year."** It's time to end the use of *all* fossil fuels.

Donald Trump's foreign policy isn't consistent on much. But one thing has remained unwavering — **his [utter devotion](#) to Saudi Arabia.**

A long-overdue victory in the fight for struggle for LGBTQ+ rights as **Germany finally [moves to ban](#) "conversion therapy."**

It's not *bad* news...**Goldman Sachs will no longer [finance](#) environmentally-destructive projects like arctic drilling,** but they, and the rest of Wall Street, have a long way to go to take responsibility for fueling climate change.

[Big Brother](#) is alive and well in China, with **technology being used by the police to spy on citizens and monitor and control behavior.** Luckily, that would never [happen here](#).

Hundreds of indigenous communities, including **the [Lisjan](#), face additional barriers to basic rights and land recognition because they are not acknowledged by the U.S. government.**

While Britain struggles with the repercussions of Brexit, **it is ignoring one of the most critical consequences: [rising](#) paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland.** 🙄

Who's fueling the war in Yemen? [This interactive map](#) by Amnesty International shows **which countries have banned arms sales to the Saudi-led coalition — and which remain complicit.**

Thousands of Yemeni lives will be at risk in the new year as their **Temporary Protected Status designation is set to expire. But some Dems are pushing back, [demanding](#)** the administration save the vital humanitarian program.

WIN WITHOUT WAR



A junior doctor has [introduced](#) **sterile, disposable hijabs to the UK**, to ensure women can continue to be badass doctors while remaining true to their religious beliefs.

Learning How to Win Without War - our Herbert Scoville Jr. Peace Fellow [reflects](#) on her first three months working to end endless war!

And finally, fancy a slice of 141-year-old cake? **One family has [kept](#) a fruit cake around since 1878...yum!**