

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



## Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

*Intel for Advocacy*

DATE: 02/21/2020

SL: There is no military solution in Afghanistan.

### Don't Call it a Peace Deal

The U.S. and the Taliban are on the verge of an agreement. Today, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo [announced](#) the start of a seven-day reduction in violence on the path toward a broader deal. While nothing has been signed, the final agreement is expected to be announced by the end of the month, pending the outcome of the next seven days. If a final deal with the Taliban is signed, it would mark a milestone in the now 18-year-old war.

For many years, Win Without War has been at the forefront of the fight for an end to decades of catastrophic U.S. war in Afghanistan, and a long-term process for sustainable peace. Does Donald Trump's plan live up to our demands? While a reduction in U.S. troop levels is a step in the right direction, Trump's plan is far from an end to endless war — and further still from anything that would ensure stability, peace, and justice after decades of war. This is no peace deal. Here's why.

#### **What's in the Plan?**

Based on early reporting, the basic premise of the deal is a drawdown of U.S. military forces in exchange for the Taliban's commitment to reduce attacks and engage in intra-Afghan peace talks. Leaked information also [indicates](#) that this could be supplemented with secretive annexes, including an agreement to keep some 8,600 of the current 12,000 or so troops in the country indefinitely as "counterterrorism forces," and a shared understanding of continuing CIA operations in Taliban-controlled areas. As such, the deal on the table is an initial deal between the U.S. and the Taliban, not a final peace agreement for Afghanistan.

#### **We Can't Bomb Our Way to Peace**

Twenty years of fruitless and disastrous U.S. military operations have made absolutely clear: there is no U.S. military solution in Afghanistan, regardless of how large or small the footprint, or how long the occupation. The U.S. military presence in Afghanistan has only served to prolong the conflict and cause mass civilian harm — in 2019, a UN report [documented](#) that for the first time, U.S. and Afghan government forces were responsible for more civilian deaths than the

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



Taliban. *To the extent that Trump's deal reduces the U.S. military presence in the country, it is a welcome step forward.*

But the deal only goes so far. By maintaining two-thirds of current U.S. troops in Afghanistan — down to about the same levels as when Trump entered office — the plan utterly fails to confront the reality that there is no military solution to the country's conflict. It is a potentially positive move toward lessening violence, paired with a complete lack of acknowledgment of the reasons that violence has endured for so long. It is, in short, far from an end to the U.S.'s war in Afghanistan.

## **Building Lasting Peace**

Even if the deal were to completely end the U.S. military presence in the country, it would not be enough. After almost twenty years of occupation, and decades more of destabilizing and violent intervention, the U.S. has a moral responsibility to help establish peace, foster reconciliation, and rebuild institutions in Afghanistan.

A U.S. military withdrawal should merely be the first critical step of a multilateral diplomatic effort to negotiate a lasting peace deal that is inclusive of all sectors of Afghan civil society and all of the many external actors that have played a role in the conflict, including Pakistan, India, China, Russia, and Iran. An end to military violence must also be met by a surge in investment in other tools to ameliorate the devastation caused by decades of violence, including peacebuilding, sustainable and human-centered ([not neoliberal](#)) economic development, and governance accountability and anti-corruption reforms. The Trump administration's willingness and ability to replace a military-driven strategy with a peace-driven one is doubtful, to say the least.

## **Justice Starts at Home**

A true reckoning with two decades of U.S. war in Afghanistan would not end with the withdrawal of U.S. forces, or peacebuilding abroad— it would also seek to understand and address the causes and consequences of the conflict.

Given its role in fomenting mass displacement, the U.S. has an obligation to strengthen and expand its commitment to Afghan refugees and asylum-seekers. At minimum, this means significantly raising refugee resettlement goals, honoring the international principle of [non-refoulement](#), and joining multilateral humanitarian and development efforts to address both immediate and long-term needs.

Last year's [Afghanistan Papers](#) revealed a systematic campaign of misinformation by top government officials to hide the extent of the failure in Afghanistan from the U.S. public. Congress should expand and deepen its [investigations](#) into the revelations of the Afghanistan Papers as a part of a wider process of fact-finding and reconciliation to fully understand why the military-first approach has failed. The U.S. should also take measures to hold accountable those

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



in the U.S. responsible for the devastation, including for potential war crimes and other misdeeds, and provide reparations for those affected.

The legal justification for the invasion of Afghanistan was the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF). That legislation has served as a blank check for endless war not only in Afghanistan, but in countless unauthorized military interventions around the world, from Libya to Somalia to the Philippines. To end the endless post-9/11 wars, Congress must [repeal](#) the 2001 AUMF.

A progressive approach to ending the war in Afghanistan demands, at the least, these initial moves toward justice, as a part of a [wider movement](#) to confront the deep structural causes of rampant U.S. militarism. Given what we know about the Trump administration, it seems unlikely that this is part of its plan.

## **A First Step**

A reduction in U.S. forces in Afghanistan, even if incomplete, is a positive development. But based on what has been reported so far, Trump's plan fails to question the underlying logic of military occupation, is not a part of a wider strategy for building sustainable peace, and is not accompanied by any process of reconciliation and justice for decades of devastating conflict. On top of this, knowing Trump's record of [scuttling](#) peace talks on a whim, and generally capricious approach to foreign policy, no part of the agreement should be taken as given.

While the drawdown of U.S. forces and violence reduction measures should be welcomed, the limits of the plan must not be overlooked. It is up to us — a grassroots movement for peace, working in tandem with leadership in Congress and those fighting for change in Afghanistan — to sustain and build on the momentum, ensuring that a reduction in U.S. troop presence is not the end of the road, but a first step on a path toward stability, peace, and justice.

For more, see our latest [messaging guidance](#).

---

## **BURIED LEDES**

Don't worry, **only \$715 million worth of weapons were lost in Syria by the U.S. government.** In the fight against ISIS, the unaccountable Pentagon [lost track](#) of a LOT of equipment.

[This](#) is what it looks like to be a parent in a warzone.

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



**Nearly 900,000 Libyans are in need of humanitarian assistance** as their country [becomes](#) the world's largest theater for drone warfare.

Contrary to what the political elite think, people in the U.S. do care about foreign policy. **Articulating clear foreign policy goals will be critical to countering Trump's nationalist narrative and winning the 2020 election.**

In another move to [tighten](#) its control over the media, **China kicked out three Wall Street Journal reporters for an editorial criticizing the government.** (In the U.S., we block criticism by having billionaire-politicians [own the media](#) in the first place. Problem solved.)

The 2020 [Financial Secrecy Index](#) is out: global financial secrecy has decreased by seven percent. **But the U.S., always the over-achiever, has INCREASED in secrecy by fifteen percent.**

Over 60 civil society organizations [called on the IMF to tackle the gendered impacts of its policy prescriptions](#) — austerity, labor repression, and privatization fall hardest on women.

Over 60 civil society organizations *a/so* shared a statement [condemning the Trump administration's decision to lift prohibitions on the use of landmines](#). Make no mistake: this will cost civilian lives.

Last week, we shared how Congresswoman Ilhan Omar's Pathway to PEACE bill package charts the way forward for progressive foreign policy. Here, **Win Without War's Kate Kizer [shares more](#).**

**With government provision of healthcare and education failing, young Somalis are volunteering to keep these vital programs running,** highlighting the [resilience](#) of the community and the need for international support.

**The U.S. helps arm Egypt, which tortures its citizens, Saudi Arabia, which bombs civilians in Yemen, and the Philippines, which uses death squads to kill accused drug traffickers.** Congress must [put an end](#) to its complicity in war crimes.

The U.S. can help [make](#) the Iranian elections freer and fairer by **allowing U.S. companies to provide Iran with internet services, bypassing the government's censorship mechanisms.**

# WIN WITHOUT WAR



And finally, a small town in Pennsylvania has been **displaying a knockoff Rembrandt painting for years**, but [discovered](#) this week that it's actually authentic!