The United States must end its military occupation of Afghanistan, refocus its efforts on diplomacy, peacebuilding, and supporting accountability for abuses during the conflict.

Ongoing U.S. military operations in Afghanistan have destabilized the country and prolonged the war. The Biden administration must end the U.S. role in the war, including withdrawing U.S. forces by May 2021, in favor of a diplomatic and peacebuilding surge.

- Congress must support and push President Biden to commit to a full troop withdrawal in recognition that there is no military solution to the conflict.
- Leaving special operations forces in Afghanistan, or continuing drone strikes and CIA funding of violent non-state actors will only undermine prospects for peace.
- The U.S. should follow through on its agreement with the Taliban and focus on building multilateral support for an inclusive, intra-Afghan peace process that promotes inclusion, equity, and reconciliation.

THE LONGEST WAR IN U.S. HISTORY
An entire generation of American and Afghan youth have lived under the shadow of this war.

- The U.S. must recognize that nearly 20 years of major U.S. military presence has allowed the parties to avoid seeking a comprehensive, inclusive political solution.
- Afghan civilians are suffering from escalating violence, with civilian deaths from U.S.-led airstrikes increasing by 330%. Since 2001, over 40,000 Afghan civilians have died, and over 5 million have been displaced.
- Meeting U.S. commitments under the deal with the Taliban does not mean cutting and running from Afghanistan, it means reorienting to diplomacy and dialogue rather than militarism.
- The U.S. must work multilaterally to end the military combat mission, with meaningful inclusion of women and youth in peace negotiations.

A DIPLOMATIC AND PEACEBUILDING SURGE
U.S. stabilization efforts have been undercut by widespread corruption, partly due to an overreliance on military to military relations and arming local warlords. The U.S. has an opportunity to reorient its stabilization operations to be situated in the framework of a comprehensive diplomatic and peacebuilding strategy focused on supporting an inclusive peace process, acknowledging responsibility for U.S. abuses, and long-term investments in locally-led efforts to build sustainable local governance and peace.

- Congress can help reorient the U.S. approach by investing in the capacity of multilateral institutions, and providing the State Department, and USAID with sustained, flexible funding to lead, monitor, and evaluate such missions.
- Overall, the U.S. must develop its stabilization goals based on local consultation and rely on local implementation, and programs should be evaluated on outcomes, rather than on money spent.

REEXAMINE U.S. COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY
Decades of drone strikes, civilian casualties, and human rights abuses committed by U.S. forces and partners in Afghanistan call into question whether counterterrorism works.

- The U.S. must end the military-only approach to counterterrorism by focusing on long-term, local investments that address economic grievances and governance failures in areas where violent groups have or may obtain influence.
- At minimum, Congress must conduct oversight to enforce the Foreign Assistance Act, Leahy Laws, and Arms Export Control Act to prohibit U.S. military assistance and training going to units that have committed gross violations of human rights.
- Congress must end CIA authority to conduct drone strikes and provide covert funding for non-state groups, seek the release of the executive branch’s interpretations of existing war-related authorities, and reform how the U.S. military addresses civilian casualties.

END THE WAR. DO NOT SCALE BACK OR PRIVATIZE THE WAR
It will not be enough to simply wind down ground wars. The U.S. should stop using any tools of war in Afghanistan — including the use of drone and manned airstrikes, paramilitary forces, and covert funding of violent non-state actors. The U.S. must stop outsourcing its endless war approach to foreign partners, covert actors, or private contractors, and instead prioritize non-military tools.
There is no military solution to the war in Afghanistan. Congress can take action to help empower a peace settlement and reorient stabilization operations in Afghanistan by advocating for and enacting the following policy recommendations:

- **Withdraw U.S. Forces from Afghanistan & Increase Transparency**
  Pass legislation that requires a timetable for the prompt withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan. Redirect war funds to institutional capacity-building. Require the DoD to report total deployed U.S. military personnel data on a quarterly basis, a practice ended by the Trump administration in 2017.

- **Introduce or Support Legislation That Repeals the 2001 AUMF**
  Passed in the hours after the September 11th attacks, the 2001 AUMF has been misused as authorization for the ensuing 19 years of war in Afghanistan (and elsewhere). Congress should immediately repeal the 2001 AUMF and debate the need for any new AUMF.

- **Adopt a Conflict-Prevention Approach to Stabilization**
  Introduce or support legislation that reorients U.S. stabilization operations to a conflict prevention approach that addresses state fragility, like the Global Fragility Act. Conduct oversight of U.S. diplomatic engagement in the Afghan peace process to ensure the full participation of women and youth.

- **Invest in Multilateral Diplomacy**
  Support a multilateral peace process by investing in the State Department and international institutions like the UN to support the administration’s development of a coordinated diplomatic approach with regional actors who have a vested interest in resolving the conflict and will be necessary for a lasting peace.

**Select Past Legislative Action on Afghanistan**

- **2001**: Congress enacts P.L. 107-40, the 2001 AUMF

- **FY2014**: The House passes a McGovern-Smith amendment by a vote of 305 to 121 to require the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan by Dec. 31, 2014, and that if a new authorization was required, Congress should authorize it by June 2014.

- **FY2017**: Congress enacts NDAA amendment that requires the DoD and IRS to publicly post the costs for each U.S. taxpayer of the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria (Sec. 1090 of FY17 NDAA sponsored by Rep. John Lewis and adopted by voice vote).

- **FY2018**: The Senate rejects a Paul NDAA amendment 36-61 to repeal the 2001 & 2002 AUMFs.

- **FY2021**: The House rejects an Omar NDAA amendment 129-284 that would require the withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Afghanistan within 14 months of enactment. The Senate rejects a Paul-Udall NDAA amendment 33-60 that would require withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan and repeal the 2001 AUMF.

For further questions and additional resources:

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