

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

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SL: An End to Endless War?

The Takeaway:

- President Biden's decision to withdraw all U.S. troops from Afghanistan is the right step for the U.S. and Afghanistan alike, and a long-overdue recognition that we can't bomb our way to peace.
- This potential seachange would not have been possible without the long struggle of a people-powered movement for peace. And it was welcomed by a public that is weary of endless wars.
- But a troop withdrawal itself is not an end to endless war just yet. After decades of sowing conflict, the U.S. must commit to ending *all* forms of military involvement in Afghanistan, and invest in its alternative tools for peace, justice, and accountability.

Biden Announced a Full U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan. What Comes Next?

This week, President Biden [announced](#) that he would be doing what no president in the last twenty years has managed to do: “U.S. troops, as well as forces deployed by our NATO allies and operational partners, will be out of Afghanistan before we mark the 20th anniversary of that heinous attack on September 11th.” This is a pivotal moment in the history of the United States’ post-9/11 forever wars, and a Presidential decision worthy of much [praise](#).

But if, for you, this announcement raises as many questions as it answered, you're hardly alone. What does this mean? How has it been received? What comes next for Afghanistan? For endless war in general? In this week's Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief, we hope to help answer these questions and more.

Washington Faces Reality

“We can not continue the cycle of extending or expanding our military presence in Afghanistan, hoping to create ideal conditions for the withdrawal and expecting a different result.” While perhaps not the punchiest lines of Biden's announcement, these words are, in their way, remarkable. The president of the United States is facing a reality — recognizing a fact — that has long eluded the foreign policy establishment (despite many [secretly knowing](#) for years):

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There is no winning an endless war. There are no military solutions to non-military problems. We simply cannot bomb our way to peace.

The Fruit of Struggle

While President Biden is to be commended for his decision, this shift in the foreign policy tides did not come from the top alone. Winning out against a foreign policy consensus deeply enshrined in militarism and backed by a powerful arms industry took years and years of struggle — protests and rallies, writings and speeches, petitions and phone calls, research and advocacy, organizing and mobilizing. It took [leadership](#) from members of Congress, commitment from a [movement](#) of pro-peace organizations, and power from countless grassroots activists from Kansas to Kabul. It was the power of a movement that made this possible.

A Wave of Support

While Biden's announcement sparked some outrage from the usual warmongering suspects (I'm looking at you [Liz Cheney](#)), for the most part, it was met with a wave of relief and support. Members of Congress from Reps. Lee and McGovern to Senators Sanders and Warren, vocally [lauded](#) the decision (including in an [op-ed](#) from Rep. Khanna and Sen. Sanders). Organizations from [across](#) the political [spectrum](#) did [the same](#). Considering that [two thirds](#) of U.S. veterans and the [vast majority](#) of the wider U.S. public already supported withdrawal, the extent of the praise for Biden's decision outside of the "blob" of arms industry-funded think tank militarists shouldn't be much of a surprise. But just how far did this support reach? Well, Fox News [couldn't even get](#) their usual panel of four scowling men to present a united front against something Joe Biden did. That's saying something.

An End to Endless War?

While Biden's announcement is an unequivocal step forward, we must be clear: this alone is not an end to U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan. A U.S. troop presence is the most obvious and politically vulnerable tactic of militarism. But it's not the only one. The presence of U.S. combat troops may yet be replaced with an increase in covert operations, private contractors, the funding or arming of parties to the conflict, and even drone warfare. It is up to us — the pro-peace movement — to ensure that this is not the case. When we say we want to end endless war, we don't just mean an end to U.S. troop involvement. We mean an end to the endless war mindset that brought us there in the first place.

Peace, Justice... and Accountability

The U.S. occupation has done nothing but add fuel to the fire of conflict in Afghanistan. But withdrawal alone — even if it *were* a complete end to all military involvement — would not bring peace to the country. That task remains to be done, and having spurred violence in the country for decades, the United States has a role to play in doing it. Peace talks are set to [take place](#) in Turkey at the end of this month, and the United States should use its influence there to push for an inclusive, intra-Afghan peace process that addresses the root drivers of the conflict. Such a

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process will require long-term, meaningful investments in accountability, peacebuilding, and development, as well as a commitment to robust multilateral diplomacy. Importantly, this process must center the pursuit of *justice* for all victims, and *accountability*, for *all* responsible parties — **including the United States.**

An Actual End to Endless War

This week's announcement may not have marked an end to endless war. But it may have been a turning point. Now, it's up to us to seize on this momentum: to see the end to U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan to its completion, to help Afghans build a lasting peace, and to dismantle the military-first mindset that got us there in the first place. We're not there yet, but we have the power to end endless war for good.

An Iran Deal Update

Talks between the United States, Iran, and the other parties to the Iran nuclear deal continued in Vienna this week. And while a final agreement has not yet been reached, opponents of diplomacy are getting worried: an explosion at one of Iran's nuclear enrichment facilities this week was in all likelihood an act of sabotage by the Israeli government meant to undermine the talks, even at the risk of war (for more, read the National Iranian American Council's [explainer](#) here). Fortunately, talks have resumed despite the incident. Meanwhile, pressure on Biden is growing — a [letter](#) led by Senators Kaine and Murphy, and signed by 25 more, called on President Biden to put diplomacy first and make a swift reentry into the deal.

BURIED LEDES

As protests reignite following the police killing of Daunte Wright, **we affirm our unwavering support for the anti-racist protesters and call for an [end to state violence](#) everywhere.**

As the Saudi-led coalition enforces a blockade helping starve Yemenis, **a few brave activists have launched a hunger strike to last until the Biden administration uses its leverage to push Saudi Arabia to lift the blockade.** [Here](#)'s one of these activists, in her own words.

No news here, but a reminder that **the war in Afghanistan is *not* in fact, the United States' longest running war. That title goes to the 70 year old Korean war** — and there too, the United States can help bring peace by [rejecting](#) a military mindset and committing to diplomacy.

Now that we've recognized the failure of endless war in Afghanistan, how about we do the same for Iraq? **Now is the time to [end](#) our 30-year war in Iraq.**

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We've long known that international patent rules were obstructing global production of a Covid vaccine. Now, **new polling [shows](#) that the majority of U.S. voters would support waiving those patent rules for the global good.** Now the only question is: will Biden listen?

"President Biden wants to spend [even more](#) than Trump on defense." Well that sure doesn't sound like an end to the endless war mindset 😞 ...

...and neither does this: **"Joe Biden Is [Proceeding](#) With Donald Trump's Biggest Arms Deal"** — a \$23 billion weapons package to the UAE, much of which is destined to fuel the war in Yemen. Seems like we have our work cut out for us.

Here's an idea: the U.S. shouldn't funnel endless military aid to governments that use them to abuse human rights. **New legislation to be [introduced](#) today would stop U.S. military aid to Israel from being used to destroy Palestinian homes, further annexation, or fuel other violations of human rights.**

It's not foreign policy per se, but as a D.C.-based organization, we'd be remiss not to note: **a momentous D.C. statehood bill has [passed](#) out of committee and is on its way to the House.** It's time for #DCStatehood now. #51

And finally, *finally*, **someone is using data visualization for the [important things](#).**